Thank you for your interest in Alliance grants:

This deck was presented in late 2020 aimed to Canadian university researchers interested in submitting an application for an Alliance grant.

This version includes the speaking notes and it is available in both official languages on the Alliance grants Website under the Resources tab. On the same webpage, you will find an FAQ that contains the answers to the most frequent questions researchers ask.

# Preparing an Alliance grant application

A presentation for Principal Investigators

nserc-crsng.gc.ca

Fall 2020

In this presentation, we will provide you with information to help you prepare your Alliance grant application.

If you have questions after hearing the presentation, we invite you to contact us by email or phone. Please refer to our contact information on the last slide.

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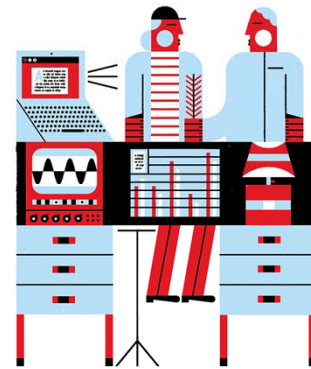
In this presentation, we will
- present a brief overview of Alliance grants
- discuss the two options that you may consider while building your Alliance project partnership, and
- describe the application and assessment processes for each option
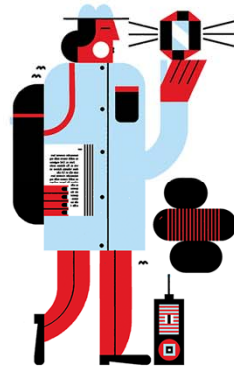
We will then share with you best practices based on what we have learned so far through the delivery of Alliance grants — in particular, what elements an Alliance application must include to be complete and acceptable to proceed to the merit assessment stage.

We will also highlight points that you should address in your application in order to strengthen it.

Finally, we will provide information on the new ways NSERC is communicating its decisions on Alliance grants, as well as on the reporting requirements for these grants.

**This PDF version of the presentation includes notes. As a result, the hyperlinks included in the original slides are not active. To access hyperlinks, please use the presentation without notes.**

# Objectives
# & options

Let's go over the objectives of the program and the options that are available.

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Alliance grants enable researchers to go **beyond** what would have been possible for them to accomplish using our previous programs.

NSERC Alliance grants

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With Alliance, our objective is to remove barriers and to provide our community with more flexibility in building partnerships that will effectively generate new knowledge and accelerate the application of research results.

Our hope is that researchers, through such partnerships, will be able to go beyond what would have been possible for them to accomplish through our previous Research Partnership programs.

Alliance grants

# Program objectives

1. Alliance is now NSERC's university research partnerships program

2. Support research in the natural sciences and engineering (NSE) led by strong, complementary, collaborative teams

3. Enable collaborations with a broader set of partner organizations (private, public, not-for-profit sectors)

4. Remove barriers and provide more flexibility in building partnerships that will effectively generate new knowledge and accelerate the application of research results for the benefit of Canadians

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Alliance grants support projects of varying scale and complexity whose main thrust must be in the natural sciences and engineering (NSE).

Projects may be short-term, small endeavours involving a single researcher and a single partner organization, or long-term endeavours involving researchers across several universities and multiple partner organizations across multiple sectors (private, public or not-for-profit).

Please note that although the main thrust of an Alliance project must be in the NSE, up to 30 per cent of the cost-shared budget can be spent on activities related to collaborations outside the NSE that are essential to the project's success and the exploitation of its anticipated outcomes.

**1**

**funding opportunity**

**2**

**options**

The two options have the same:

- objectives

- evaluation criteria

- peer review process for
  overall merit assessment

- academic community and the three
  types of partner organizations served

- requirements for the recognition
  of partner organizations

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Alliance grants offer two options for you to consider when building a partnership to carry out your project.

These options are not different funding opportunities. They relate to different levels of cost-sharing with NSERC based on specific requirements.

As you will see later in the presentation, Option 2 has been created to support projects that have specific goals and where a higher support from NSERC is justified.

Regardless of the option, Alliance grants have the same objectives, the same evaluation criteria, and the same peer review process for the overall merit assessment of applications.

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.

| | Option 1 | Option 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Alliance grants eligibility rules | ✓ | ✓ |
| Alliance grants application process | ✓ | ✓ |
| Partner organizations from all sectors are eligible and are actively involved in the project | ✓ | ✓ |
| Cost-sharing ratio | Up to 66.7% | Up to 100% |
| Funding from NSERC per year | Up to $1M | Up to $100K |
| Project **must be** driven by unmet societal needs where barriers exist | - | ✓ |
| All key organizations and societal groups **must be** involved to ensure significant impact on society, from consultation to implementation | - | ✓ |
| Project **must have** a clear strategy to make the results available to relevant groups, often beyond the participating partner organizations | - | ✓ |

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The two options relate to different levels of cost-sharing with NSERC, based on specific requirements.

They also offer different levels of NSERC funding.
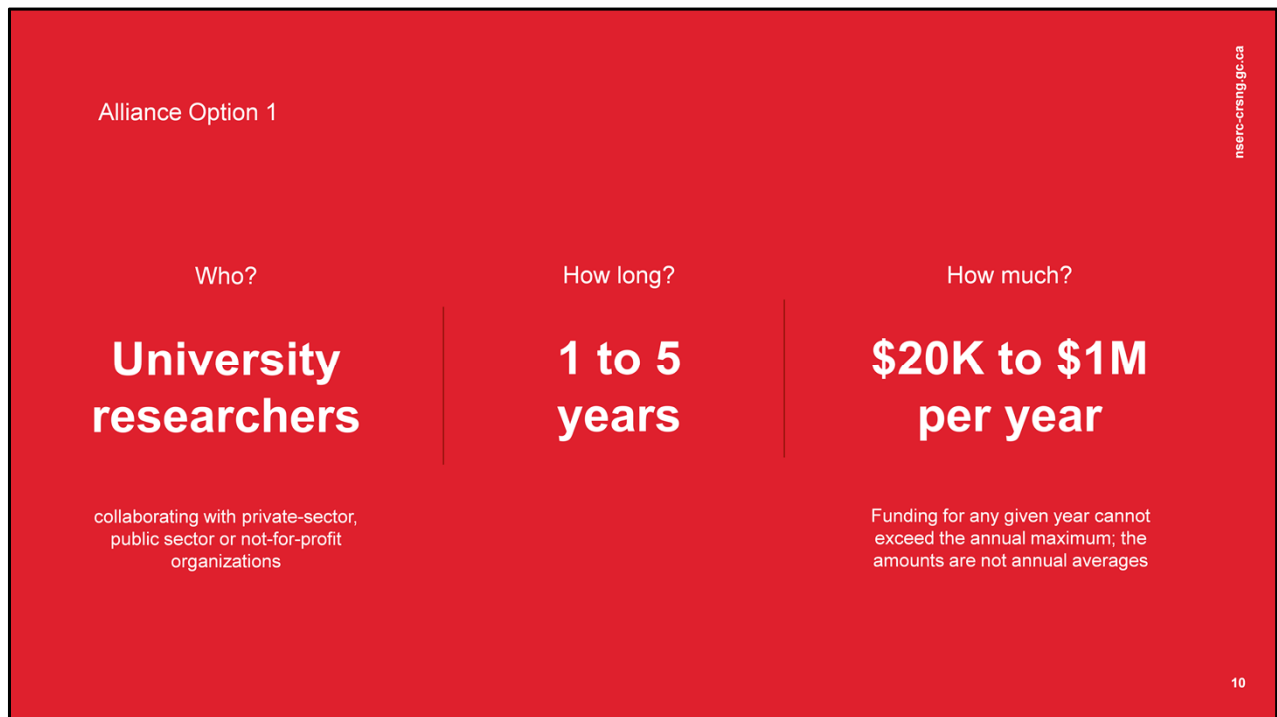
But what is specific to Option 2 projects is that:
- They are driven by an unmet societal need
- They have societal groups and organizations which are actively involved
- They offer a compelling strategy to make results available to such societal groups and organizations

We will cover these points later in the presentation.

# Alliance Option 1

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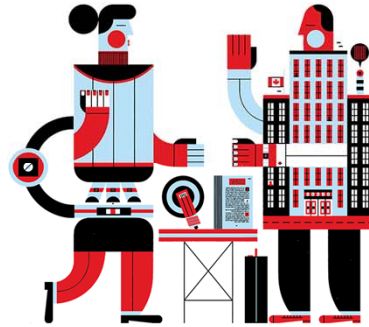
Let's now take a closer look at Alliance Option 1 and its specific requirements.

Alliance Option 1

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**Who?**

**University researchers**

collaborating with private-sector, public sector or not-for-profit organizations

**How long?**

**1 to 5 years**

**How much?**

**$20K to $1M per year**

Funding for any given year cannot exceed the annual maximum; the amounts are not annual averages

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Under Option 1, you can request funding between $20,000 and $1 million per year over up to 5 years

Please note that the amounts are not annual averages. Funding for any given year cannot be lower than $20,000, or exceed one million.

Alliance Option 1

**Partner organizations**

The partner organizations involved in your Alliance project can be from the private, public or not-for-profit sector

At least 1 must be recognized for cost sharing and make a cash contribution commensurate with applicable cost-sharing ratio

Each must be involved in the project and contribute to its success

At least 1 must have the ability to exploit the research results and to achieve the desired outcomes

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The partner organizations involved in an Alliance project can be from the private, public or not-for-profit sector.

At least one must be recognized for cost-sharing with NSERC and must make a cash contribution commensurate with the applicable cost-sharing ratio.

This means that there can be multiple partner organizations involved in the same project, including partners whose cash contributions are not factored into cost sharing.

But each partner organization must be actively involved in the project and contribute to its success.

And at least one partner organization that is recognized for cost sharing must have the ability to exploit the research results and to achieve the desired outcomes.
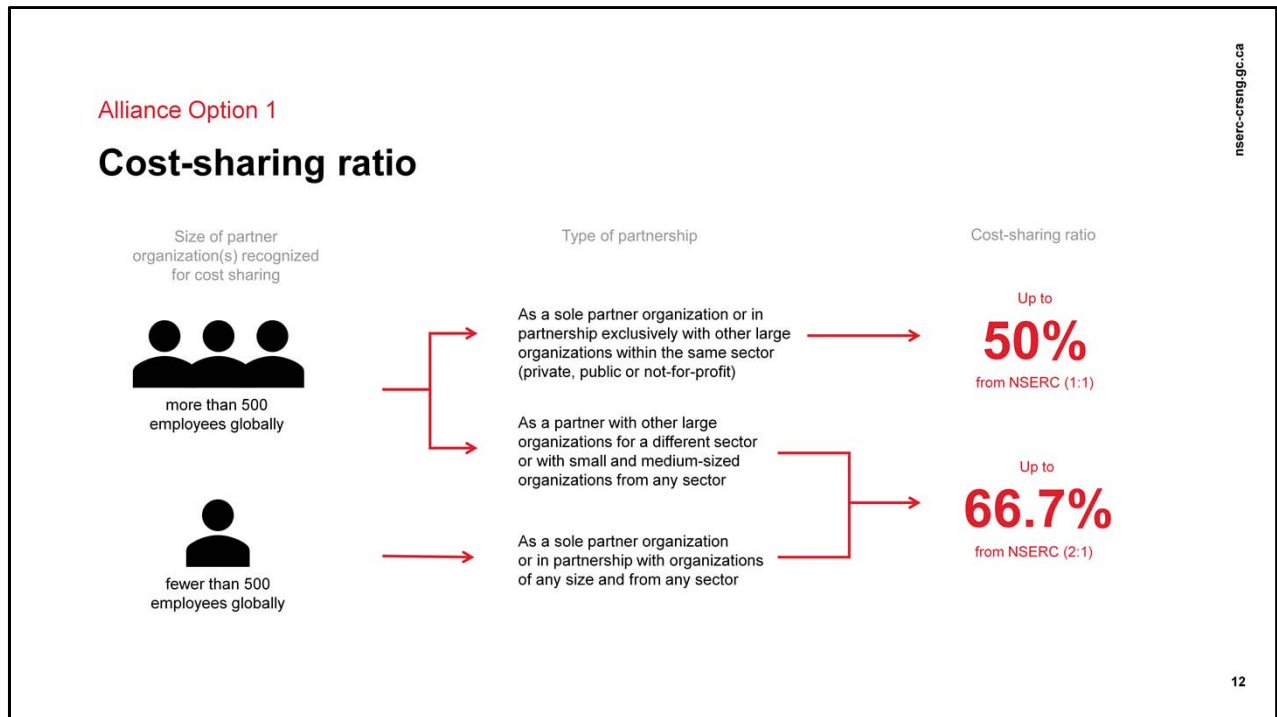
The level of cost-sharing under Option 1 depends on the type and the global size of the recognized partner organizations involved in the project. NSERC can cover 50 per cent or 66.7 per cent of the direct costs of research.

Sector  in this context means the private, public or not-for-profit sectors, and not specific industries (such as aerospace or fisheries) or specific areas (such as Indigenous communities)

- For example, *organizations from the private sector in aerospace, construction and polymers partnering on a project would be considered in the same sector (private).*

The 50 per cent or 1:1 cost-sharing ratio applies to large organizations as a sole partner organization or in partnership exclusively with other large organizations within the same sector (private, public or not-for-profit).

- For example*, a project in partnership with two large government departments.*

The 66.7 per cent or 2:1 cost-sharing ratio applies when the partnership includes at least one small or medium-sized organization or when partners are from more than one sector.

- For example*, a project in partnership with a large company and a large government department.*
- For example*, a large company and a small not-for-profit organization.*

Note that token partners that are involved simply to justify a more advantageous cost-sharing ratio or whose participation is not compellingly demonstrated to enable benefits to Canada will not be recognized.

Alliance Option 1

## Cost-sharing ratio
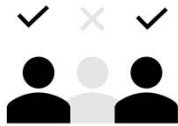


NSERC's contribution for a given ratio is determined by the sum of cash contributions from all **recognized** partner organizations

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NSERC's grant is calculated on the basis of cost sharing with partner organizations that are recognized for cost sharing, taking the sum of their cash contributions into account.

This means that additional partner organizations, which are not recognized for cost sharing, may also contribute to supporting the project. However, their cash contributions will not be recognized in the cost-sharing calculation.

Alliance Option 1

## How to apply

1. Apply at any time. There is no limit on the number of applications you can submit for Option 1
2. Fill out the proposal template
3. Submit a complete application through NSERC's online system

( ! )

- Follow the instructions
- Keep the headings and bullets
- Do not change font or font size
- Do not change the margins
- Keep within page limit (includes the template's heading and bullets)

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You can apply at any time throughout the year, and there is no limit to the number of applications you can submit to Alliance under Option 1.

You must prepare your application by filling out the proposal template following the instructions for completing an Alliance grant application, and you must submit the proposal through NSERC's online system.
- You must not exceed the page limit, which depends on the level of funds that is requested. Any page exceeding the page limit will be removed.
- You must keep the template instructions and bullets, which are included in the page limit.
- You must address each and every bullet in the template. We will focus more on this later in the presentation.

A complete application must also include:
- an up-to-date Personal Data Form (Form 100A); this is a different form from the Form 100, which was used with the previous partnership programs
- an up-to-date Common CV (CCV) attachment for the applicant and all co-applicants
- partner organizations forms
- if the application is a resubmission of a previously unsuccessful application, you may include a cover letter describing the changes you have made in the new submission.

The application may also include biographical sketches for collaborators to describe their expertise.

Please check the instructions to determine which documents are required.
Note that any other documents you include will be removed from the application.

Alliance Option 1

# Evaluation process

1. Administration assessment
2. Merit assessment
3. Funding decision

Once NSERC receives your application, it first undertakes an administrative assessment to ensure it is complete and complies with our requirements.

If this step is not satisfactorily completed, the application will not be accepted.

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Once NSERC receives an Alliance application, it first undergoes an administrative assessment to ensure it is complete and complies with our requirements.

An application that is not complete or compliant will not be accepted.

Alliance Option 1

# Evaluation process

1. Administration assessment

2. **Merit assessment**
   I. Review mechanisms
   II. Evaluation criteria
   III. Determining the overall merit

3. Funding decision

If step 1 is satisfactorily completed, NSERC proceeds with the merit assessment of the application to determine priority of funding on a competitive basis.

Different mechanisms may be used for the merit assessment stage.

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If the administrative  assessment is satisfactorily completed, NSERC proceeds with the merit assessment of the application to determine priority of funding on a competitive basis.

**Alliance Option 1**

# Evaluation process

1. Administration assessment
2. Merit assessment
   I. Review mechanisms
   II. Evaluation criteria
   III. Determining the overall merit
3. Funding decision

| Size of project | Small | Medium | Large |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average annual request | $20K to $30K | $30K to $300K | $300K to $1M |
| Review mechanism * | NSERC File Managers or External reviewers ** | External reviewers | Ad hoc committee |

\* NSERC does not hold evaluation site visit for Alliance grants
\** If the applicants do not hold current NSERC peer-reviewed grants

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Depending on the average annual request, NSERC may use different mechanisms to carry out the merit assessment of an Alliance application.

For a small project, with an annual request of at least $20,000 and up to an average of $30,000, NSERC file managers will undertake the merit assessment based on existing NSERC peer review—that is, when the applicant and co-applicants hold an active peer-reviewed grant from NSERC as primary applicant at the time of application. If the applicant and co-applicants do not have any current NSERC peer-reviewed funding, NSERC will use expert external reviewers, who will undertake independent assessments and submit individual written reports.

For a medium project, with an average annual request of more than $30,000 and up to $300,000, NSERC will typically use expert external reviewers, who will undertake independent assessments and submit individual written reports.

For a large project, with an average annual request greater than $300,000 and up to a maximum of $1 million, NSERC will typically undertake the merit assessment using an expert ad hoc review committee, which will submit its findings and comments in a single written report. Such a committee will undertake this task through a teleconference, a videoconference or any other secure electronic format NSERC will deem appropriate. The committee will not interact at any stage with the applicant or other participants in the application.

Please note that NSERC will not hold evaluation site visits for Alliance projects. Site visits held for previous university partnerships programs usually allowed applicants to provide new information and clarifications, which added to their proposal. Since Alliance grants provide funding on a competitive basis, it is important to avoid giving an advantage to any application by allowing the Applicant to provide additional information.

Alliance Option 1

# Evaluation process

① Administration assessment

② Merit assessment
  I. Review mechanisms
  II. Evaluation criteria
  III. Determining the overall merit

③ Funding decision
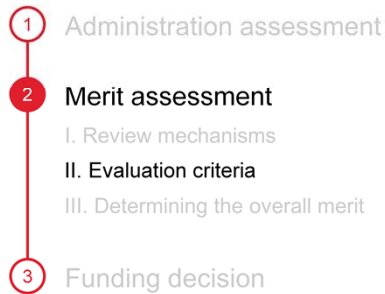
The merit assessment is based on 4 equally weighted evaluation criteria:

1. **relevance and outcomes**
2. **partnership**
3. **quality of the proposal**
4. **training**

Each evaluation criterion has multiple subcriteria for a total of 11.

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The merit assessment of Alliance applications is based on four equally weighted evaluation criteria:
- relevance and outcomes
- partnership
- quality of the proposal
- training

Each evaluation criterion has multiple subcriteria, for a total of 11

The proposal must address all of the criteria and subcriteria satisfactorily to be considered for funding.

On this slide, we present the merit indicators for the three subcriteria of the relevance and outcomes criterion for illustration purposes.

A rating will be assigned to each subcriterion on a four-point scale. The rating may be "Does not satisfy," "Meets," "Exceeds" or "Exceptional."

We invite you to click on the link provided on this slide to review the indicators NSERC uses to rate how meritorious an application is against each subcriterion.

Alliance Option 1

# Evaluation process
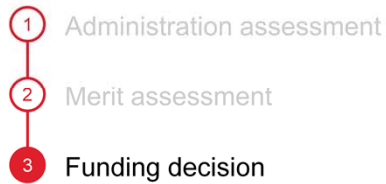
Once your application is assessed, priority for funding will be determined according to the established merit indicators.

1. Administration assessment

NSERC will select proposals for funding on a competitive basis.

2. Merit assessment

3. Funding decision

You will be informed by NSERC as to whether you will be awarded a grant to support your research project.

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Finally, NSERC determines priority for funding for all applications based on the merit ratings they receive.

# Alliance
# Option 2

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Let's now shift our attention to Alliance Option 2 and its specific requirements

Alliance Option 2 grants support projects that are driven by an unmet societal need

This must be reflected from the start and throughout the project, through its goal, its participants, its activities and deliverables, as well as the implementation of results.

An Alliance Option 2 proposal must meet all three of the characteristics shown on this slide.

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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The first characteristic is societal impact.

The project must be driven by an unmet societal need and aim to generate societal benefits such as improving quality of life, health and safety, or public goods and resources.
- It may tackle national or regional priorities, or global issues that have an important impact on Canada.

Finding solutions must require research in NSE, which can be achieved in partnership with universities and other organizations seeking to resolve these issues, and the results must be made available to the identified user groups without any limits or restrictions.

One of the mains goals of Option 2 is to support such efforts to make things happen in areas where barriers are preventing needs from being filled.
- For example, such barriers might be a lack of technological knowledge or skills to envision original solutions; a lack of united action among essential players to identify the needs and to find solutions by combining their knowledge, experience and skills; or simply a lack of means to ensure the sustainability of projects.

Addressing these issues may lead to
- Building capacity to transform a sector and become a game changer
- Supporting governments in delivering on their policy or regulation mandates
- Paving the way to a new area of the economy or overcoming an issue affecting an entire business area

An Option 2 project is expected to generate societal benefits within a reasonable timeline. But a final outcome may not be reached at the end of an Option 2 project if it is part of a larger endeavour that leads to the targeted 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

The main take-away message is that the project's outcomes must reach beyond the partner organizations and near-term economic success to impact and benefit society.

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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The second characteristic is making connections.

As in any Alliance project, there must be a strong and meaningful collaboration with all the key partner organizations needed to conduct the research and to apply it.

Option 2 goes further by including key societal groups or associations, end users and implementers, to ensure that the project is driven by a real need to overcome a societal issue, and to ensure that the solutions are successfully implemented.

Such "non-traditional" partners may formally join the application or may not. But the application must describe the role they have played in defining the issues and their solutions, as well as the future role they will play to ensure that the project generates relevant results and that these results are successfully implemented, even if this happens after the project is over.

Applicants could consider completing an environmental scan of stakeholders to help identify who to consider connecting with, either directly or through partners involved in the project.

"

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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Of course, we expect the partners to be strongly committed and active, as in Option 1.

They must have the knowledge, the skills, the experience, and the networks and connections with the right organizations to generate ideas, break barriers, and lay the groundwork for creative solutions.

Alliance Option 2

## 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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The third characteristic is broad outcomes.

As mentioned, the objective is for the project to yield outcomes that will not simply benefit the partner organizations.

Therefore, the targeted user groups must be kept informed of progress and results, which must be shared and accessible in as many formats as possible.

The applicants must have a strategy to raise awareness of the resulting products, services or policies, so that any interested party can access and use them.

In developing this strategy, applicants should take into account that scientific publications are not accessible to non-technical users.

Alliance Option 2

## Characteristic 3: Broad outcomes

Expectations:

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

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

- **long terms**: measurable societal impact

Projects are expected to show measurable societal benefits, although the timelines for these benefits can vary from one project to another.

As a first step, convincing, strong and valuable relationships should be built between the applicant and the partners, and with the stakeholders who will benefit from the results in the medium term.

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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

Last but not least, 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.
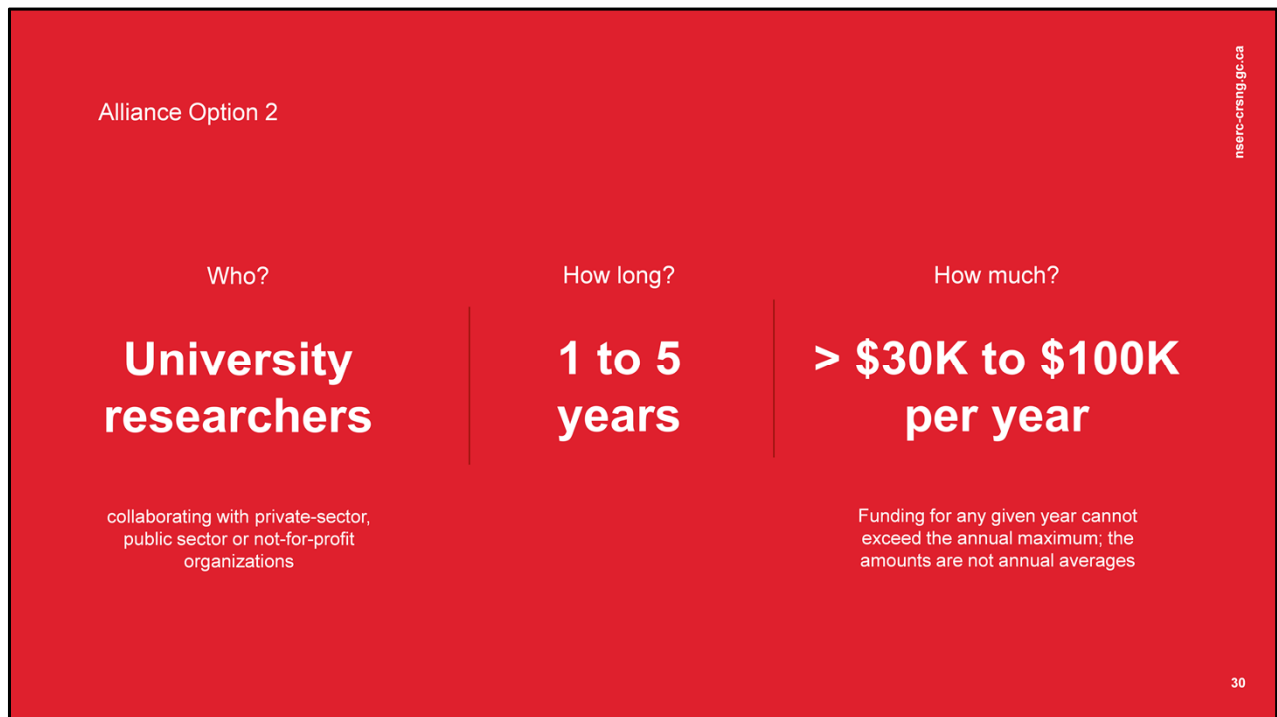
Let's review the other  distinguishing features of Option 2:

- The annual amount requested from NSERC must be higher than $30,000, and up to $100,000.
- The duration of projects can range from one to five years.
- Funding for any given year must be over$30,000 and cannot exceed the annual maximum; the amounts are not annual averages.
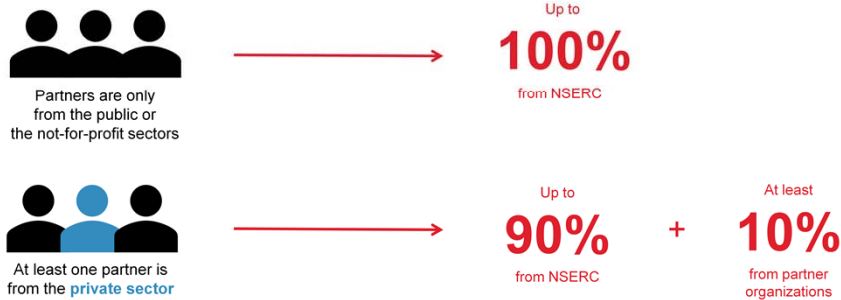
As mentioned earlier, under Option 2, NSERC will provide increased financial support toward the project's direct costs.

NSERC will cover up to 100 per cent of the costs for projects involving public or not-for-profit partner organizations only.

For projects involving partner organizations from the private sector, at least 10 per cent of the costs must be covered by cash contributions from partner organizations recognized for cost-sharing.

Please note that the same rules as those for Option 1 apply with respect to the recognition of partner organizations for cost-sharing.

Even though NSERC may cover up to 100 per cent of the project's cost, it is mandatory for the project to involve at least one partner organization whose cash contributions would be recognized, had there been any.

The proposal includes an additional three-page Public Impact Value Proposition (PIVP). The applicant must complete five points to explain how the project is aligned with Option 2's three characteristics. The three pages of the PIVP are not counted in the page length for the rest of the proposal.

Otherwise, the application has the exact same structure as in Option 1, and it is submitted through the NSERC online system.

The number of applications a researcher can submit as applicant or co-applicant is limited to one per 12-month period, starting on the date of the submission. Similarly, the number of applications any partner organization can be involved in is limited to two per 12-month period. Please note that an organization includes all of its divisions, subsidiaries or agencies. We understand that it may be challenging for large organizations to manage multiple applications; however, we rely on them to monitor their involvement in Alliance projects .

These limits will take into account any application that is submitted to NSERC and accepted after our administrative assessment, regardless of whether the application is funded.

These constraints, as well as the funding limits, will be revisited at a later time.

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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As it is the case for Option1, every new application is first administratively assessed by NSERC staff. If it is determined that the application is is complete and meets all our requirements, it is submitted to the PIVP selection committee

Alliance Option 2

# Evaluation process

1. Administration assessment
2. **PIVP selection committee**
3. Peer review
4. Funding decision
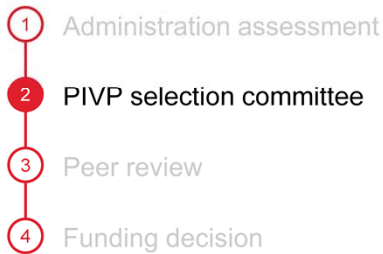
The committee consists of 10 to 15 members who are selected for their broad knowledge and their multidisciplinary and multisectoral expertise and experience.

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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This committee has between 10 and 15 members, selected for their broad knowledge and their multidisciplinary and multisectoral expertise and experience. This committee will not look at the overall merit of the application against the evaluation criteria. Rather, it will focus on the three-page PIVP section of the proposal to determine whether the project meets Option 2's three characteristics, and whether a higher financial contribution from NSERC is justified.

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

The  PIVP selection committee meets regularly to examine applications that were received up to a month before each meeting. Applicants should not aim at any particular meeting to decide when to submit their proposals.

Alliance Option 2

# Evaluation process

① Administration assessment

② PIVP selection committee

possibility to resubmit
under Option 1

✗

③ Peer review

④ Funding decision
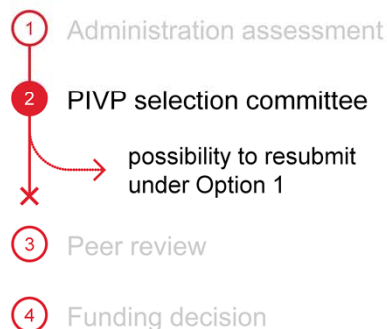
If the outcome of the PIVP is negative, the application will not be funded.

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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The outcome of this assessment stage is either positive or negative.

If it is negative, the application will not be funded. Applicants may rework the proposal, including its budget, and resubmit it under Option 1 if sufficient funds can be secured from the recognized partner organizations.

Alliance Option 2

# Evaluation process

1. Administration assessment
2. PIVP selection committee
3. **Peer review**
4. Funding decision
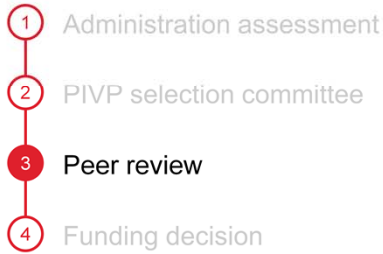
If the outcome of the PIVP is positive, the application is sent to external reviewers who are experts in the proposal's area.

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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If the outcome 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 exact same evaluation criteria as in Option 1.

The PIVP section will not be shared with external reviewers, since the fit with Option 2's characteristics has already been determined by the PIVP selection committee.

The rest of the proposal must be complete because information presented in the PIVP will not be used in the overall merit assessment of the application.

Alliance Option 2

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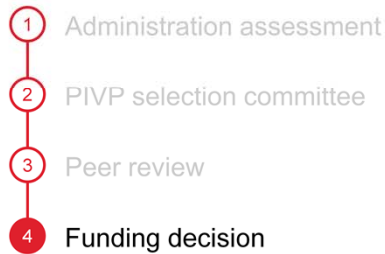
Based on the comments received from the external reviewers, NSERC completes the assessment of the application by assigning ratings to the evaluation of each subcriteria using the merit indicators, as in Option 1.

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

**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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We will now review what Option 2 is not and when to consider Option 2.

Option 2 was not created to replace Engage grants or Strategic Partnership grants.
- *Engage grants were intended to foster the development of new research partnerships by supporting short-term R&D projects aimed at addressing a company-specific problem.*
- *Strategic Partnership grants supported researchers to undertake R&D in set broad target areas that were updated once every five years.*

As mentioned before, Option 2 is expected to create broader partnerships and outcomes than Option 1. We expect to see the development of partnerships involving multiple types of organizations, including society and user groups or associations, to ensure that the project adequately responds to a well-established societal need and that the results can be achieved and implemented.

Choosing Option 2 is not appropriate when the project has not involved — or at least consulted with — organizations representing the people who would benefit from the results. Benefits to society should be the driver, not an afterthought.

The PIVP Committee would not consider proposals showing potential societal or environmental benefits, without a solid consultation with the interested parties and a plan to allow them to implement the results, aligned with the objectives of Option 2.

Option 2 was not designed to alleviate the costs associated with creating new

partnerships when the goal is not in line with the option's specific objectives.

Option 2 is not intended to support projects centred on the researcher-partner organization or to fund the development of products or services that are mainly meant to generate profit for partner organizations. In such cases, Option 1 would be more appropriate.

Option 2 is also not meant to replace investments that are normally expected from organizations motivated by exclusivity and immediate profit.

This slide lists the elements for considering Option 2.

Keep in mind that your project may address needs that can impact Canada as a whole or any of its regions, and that these needs may not be currently met for any number of reasons. For example:
- There may be no scientific knowledge or even awareness in relation to these needs.
- No practical solution is available or has ever been explored.
- There are barriers to undertaking work toward addressing the needs, such as the lack of integration of the key players; technological roadblocks or missing enabling technology; or lack of interest due to limited profitability outlook resulting in insufficient or non-existing investments.

Option 2 is designed to help the research community overcome such challenges with the appropriate partner organizations by providing funding to cover off up to 100 per cent of the project's direct costs, when a viable solution can be reached and the potential for societal impact is high.

The ultimate goals may be achieved beyond the scope and timeline of the proposed project. In this case, Option 2 provides support to allow researchers to make decisive advances toward these goals.

**Before applying to Option 2**

Does the project respond to the three characteristics? Was it motivated by an identified unmet societal need?

Were appropriate stakeholders consulted?

What are the goals of your partner organizations?

Have you carefully answered the five questions in the PIVP section?

Have you clearly outlined how all interested stakeholder groups in and beyond your partner organization's network have been and will be involved to achieve optimal results and impact?

Have you justified the need for a higher level of investment of public funds? A project that would fit under Option 1 will not be accepted under Option 2.

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We would like to end the Option 2 section with a few tips based on what we have learned since Option 2 was launched.

- Carefully consider the goals and characteristics of Option 2 before deciding to apply.
- Make sure that your project responds to an identified and unmet societal need and that the appropriate society groups, end-users, implementers, and any other relevant stakeholders have been identified and involved. They play an important role in defining the needs and barriers, as well as in designing a strategy for appropriate solutions, and in implementing those solutions to reach maximum impact.
- Make sure that the partner organizations understand and adhere to the principles of Option 2. If their goals are different, such as primarily short-term gains for their organizations, Option 1 is the appropriate vehicle.
- When filling in the application template, pay a particular attention to the three-page PIVP section.
- Remember that the PIVP committee will use this section to decide whether your project meets all three characteristics and whether its evaluation will continue through peer review, or whether it fails.

Therefore, you must answer all five questions in the PIVP section of the proposal carefully. Experience to date has shown that applicants have difficulty with two questions:

- In the section asking you to outline the project's plan to involve groups in the partner organizations' networks to achieve optimal results and impact, you need to show a plan and concrete efforts to reach beyond the partner organizations to define the problem and disseminate outputs. This is one of the aspects that differentiates Option 2 from Option 1.
- Also in the last section, applicants must provide a convincing reason why a higher level of investment of public funds is required for this project. This should be well thought out. Applicants need to make a convincing case why partners cannot contribute the funds they would in Option 1. For example, trying to reduce research costs, lack of a dedicated budget, or allocation of existing budgets to other projects would not be considered sufficient to justify funding under Option 2. Choosing Option 2 to continue research with the same partners who have been supporting it financially for years, or to undertake research in a highly competitive and well-funded sector where large economic gains are expected, would not be considered appropriate.

# Best practices

Let's now discuss best practices applicants should consider while preparing their Alliance application, regardless of the option they choose.

These best practices are based on what we have learned since Alliance grants were launched in May 2019.

Since then, we have noticed that some applications are rejected at the administrative assessment stage and do not proceed further.

This is due to various reasons, but we are seeing some recurring problems, which we will outline in the next slides.

Our goal is to help applicants prepare a complete application before submitting it to NSERC.

Best practices

# Main reasons for not accepting applications

1. altering the proposal template's format, text or margins; not keeping bullet points in the proposal template

2. not complying with NSERC presentation standards for proposal

3. exceeding the total allowed number of pages

4. not addressing each of the requests listed in the bullet points included in the proposal template under each heading

5. missing adequate demonstration that equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), with explicit practices, has been considered in the training plan

6. inadequate cost-sharing ratio

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The main reasons for not accepting applications are listed on this slide and the next one. We invite you to carefully review them.

Several applications were rejected at the administrative review stage because the format of the proposal was altered, the bullets were removed, or the presentation standards were not respected, or the page limit was exceeded. In other cases, all bullets were not addressed, applicants did not demonstrate how explicit EDI practices will be considered in the training plan, or the wrong cost sharing ratio was chosen.

Best practices

# Main reasons for not accepting applications

7. erroneous recognition of partner organizations' cash contributions in cost-sharing calculations

8. annual requested amount below $20,000 (this minimum is not an average over the project's duration)

9. inclusion of a letter of support rather than a Partner Organization Form

10. use of Form 100 free-form section instead of Form 100A; non-compliance with instructions for Form 100A

11. no in-kind contributions from partner organizations

12. out-of-date CCV (6 years)

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In some cases, cash contributions from certain partner organizations was erroneously recognized in cost sharing, or the proposal showed no evidence of in-kind contributions from the partners, or even that the Partner Organization Form, which is mandatory, was replaced by a support letter. In other cases, the minimum amount requested per year from NSERC was below $20,000, or the CCV of the applicants was out of date, or even, the Form 100A was not compliant with the instructions.

As you know, Alliance grants are awarded on a competitive basis.

To maintain fairness and consistency in the evaluation process, it is essential that every application meets the requirements outlined on the Alliance website and in the application instructions. Otherwise, it will not be accepted.

It is therefore very important for applicants to ensure that all requirements are met before submitting an application.

Applicants must carefully read each bullet point in the proposal template and provide information that addresses  all of its elements effectively.

They must realize that every element that is included or that is missing will affect the application's merit assessment.

**Best practices**

# Main reasons for not accepting Option 2 applications

1. Misunderstanding the three required characteristics

2. Inability to provide a convincing Public Impact Value Proposition (PIVP)

3. Wrong approach to building the project

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Let's review the main reasons for rejection of Option 2 applications.

Misunderstanding the three basic characteristics: The applicant should understand the meaning and importance of each of the three characteristics, as they form the basis of Alliance Option 2 applications. Failure to establish societal need is a frequent weakness .

Inability to provide a convincing Public Impact Value Proposition: If the applicant does not understand the meaning and importance of each of the three characteristics, they will not be able to answer the questions in the PIVP convincingly. Often, the evidence provided on consultation with end users or societal groups is insufficient, and the justification for an increased level of funding is insufficiently laid out.

Wrong approach to building the project: In a successful Option 2 application, the societal issue or problem is at the centre of the project, and all important steps in building the proposal are taken with the societal issue and societal outcomes in mind.

Societal impact and benefits not reflected in activities and deliverables: Successful proposals build the importance and the presence of societal impact and benefits into the proposal's research activities and deliverables. This is the best approach when developing an Option 2 proposal.

Let's remind ourselves that projects focusing heavily on developing products or services that the partner plans to commercialize are a better match for Option 1.

# Partner organizations

Choose the appropriate partner organizations that will actively contribute to the success of the project and ensure that the results will be exploited, generating positive outcomes for Canada.

Read the Role of partner organizations section on the website for more details.

**Partner organization self-assessment tool**

- The tool helps a potential partner organization determine if its cash contributions to an Alliance project may be recognized in cost-sharing calculations with NSERC.

- NSERC's final decision on the recognition of a partner's cash contribution will be made in the context of the proposed project.

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It is important to choose the appropriate partner organizations that will actively contribute to the success of the project and ensure that the results will be exploited, generating positive outcomes for Canada.

The Role of partner organizations page on the Alliance website describes in detail the expectations for participating organizations, and in which cases their cash contributions can be recognized in cost sharing .

Organizations  do not receive a blanket eligibility status in Alliance. NSERC's final decision on the recognition of a partner's cash contribution is always made in the context of the proposed project.

An interactive web-based tool has been created to help you and your potential partners assess whether their cash contributions may be recognized in cost-sharing calculations with NSERC. The assessment makes use of skip logic—that is, the next question is based on the answer to the current one—to walk the respondent through a series of questions.

The tool makes use of the same explicit requirements we have on our website for each type of organization (private, public, not-for-profit), but the interactive assessment helps to avoid oversights and get a quick answer.

Best practices

# Partner organizations:
# Partner organization form

Must be completed by authorized contact
for the partner organization

Must include the organization's profile (1 page)
and address 2 requirements:

- description of organization, including nature of its operations
  in Canada and how it intends to grow them by developing innovative
  new or improved products, services, processes or policies

- demonstration that organization has existing or planned capacity
  to achieve the project's expected results (human resources, facilities
  and financial capabilities)

( ! )

- Reference to partner
  organization's website
  is not acceptable in lieu
  of the profile

- Refer to the instructions
  for more details

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Each partner organization must complete the Partner Organization Form, which is a required component of the application.

Once identified and invited by the applicant in the Online System, the partner organization's authorized contact person will receive an email with a link to the online form for them to complete it.

The form includes the free-form one-page Partner Organization Profile. As stated earlier, it is essential for partner organizations to take the time to carefully address the two specific elements that are required for this profile. The information provided should complement that included by the applicant in the proposal.

Again, we would like to highlight the fact that a copy-paste of generic information found on the partner organization's website or a simple reference to such website is not acceptable.

## Cost-sharing options

Choose the appropriate **option**:

- Option 1 or Option 2
- Option 2 has specific characteristics
- Choice for Option 2 must not be based on financial impact
  on partner organizations only

Choose the appropriate **cost-sharing ratio**:

- percentage depends on the partner organization's size and sector

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After you have chosen the appropriate option, you must choose the cost-sharing ratio that applies to your case, which is determined according to the sector and size of the partner organization. This is described in detail on the Funding page of the Alliance website.

Best practices

# Proposal template

- Keep the headings and bullets
- Do not change font or font size or margins
- Address all of the bullet points' requests
- Keep within page limit (includes the template's heading and bullets) – see instructions for more details

**Download the Proposal template**
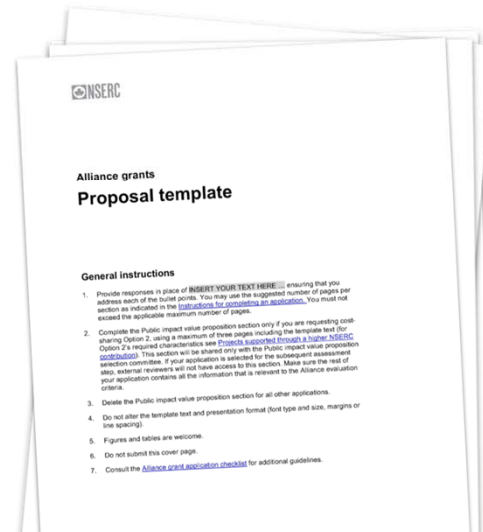
Let's review the Alliance proposal template.

The general instructions on how to use and complete the template are provided on the template's cover page.

The template's cover page does not count toward the total page limit. As indicated at the bottom of the cover page, it is not to be submitted with the proposal.

The proposal, and its page count, effectively starts with the page that bears the heading "Background and expected outcomes."

Pages used for the References section are not included in the total page count.

For applications submitted under Option 1, delete the PIVP section.

Remember to:
- Keep all the headings and bullet points.
- Not change the font type, the font size, or the margins.
- Keep within the total page limit, which is determined by the application's average annual request from NSERC, and
- Address all of the bullet points' requests.

## Proposal template: page limits

The number of suggested, maximum or additional pages always includes the NSERC template text.

\* No active NSERC peer-reviewed grant: you may submit a maximum of 10 pages

\*\* Multi-party projects: you may add up to 3 pages (under Team) strictly to provide details on project management, governance structure and university support

**View this table online**

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| Average annual request | Up to $30K * | Up to $300K | More than $300K |
|---|---|---|---|
| Section | Suggested number of pages per section | | |
| Background & expected outcomes | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Partnership | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| Proposal | 1.5 | 4 | 10 |
| Team | 0.75 | 1 | 4 ** |
| Training plan | 0.75 | 1 | 3 |
| Maximum total of pages | 5 | 10 | 25 |
| PIVP: Option 2 only | + 3 pages to the maximum above for the PIVP | | |

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This slide shows the table that summarizes the proposal sections and length. It can be found in the Instructions for completing an Alliance application.

Please note that the page limit for applications requesting over $300,000 per year from NSERC has been modified in October 2020; it is now 25 pages instead of 15.

The length of individual sections of the proposal are suggestions only. It is up to the applicants to structure the proposal around the prescribed headings and bullet points in a way they consider appropriate to provide the requested information.

The proposal's maximum number of pages, however, is strict and is based on the average annual amount requested from NSERC.

Pages in excess of the limit will be removed. If information for any section in the proposal is truncated, the application will be considered incomplete and will not be accepted. Any unrequested documents will also be removed.

Best practices

**Proposal template:
Background and outcomes**

Describe the need for original research
to address the project's topic and the potential
for generating new scientific knowledge:

- How will the topic be addressed through original research?

- What are the concepts or directions that may lead
to advances in the field? What is the type and scope
of the anticipated advances?

- How is the proposed project positioned relative
to the state-of-the-art?

Please remember that all criteria and every bullet point under each criterion must be addressed. Failure to address any bullet point will result in the application not being complete, and therefore, it will not be accepted.

Applicants should not forget to carefully address the following points in the proposal.

Under the "Background and Outcomes" heading, applicants must describe the need for original research to address the project's topic, as well as the potential for generating new scientific knowledge.

In doing so, the following questions should be addressed:
- How will the topic be addressed through original research?
- What are the concepts or directions that may lead to advances in the field? What is the type and scope of the anticipated advances?
- How is the proposed project positioned relative to the state-of-the-art?

Best practices

# Proposal template: Partnerships

Explain how each partner organization
has been involved in the co-design
of the project and how it will be actively
involved in it:

- complemented by the description of in-kind
  contributions in the pertinent section

Insert your name here

**Background and expected outcomes**
- Outline the goals of the partnership and explain the potential outcomes and impacts.
- Describe the importance of the topic to Canada and how the expected outcomes will benefit Canada.
- Explain the new concepts or directions needed to address the topic and how this research will fill knowledge gaps related to developing new and innovative policies, standards, products, services, processes or technologies in Canada. Position the proposed project relative to other efforts by the researchers and partner organizations and to any related research.
- Outline efforts the partner organizations will invest following the project's completion to advance the results in Canada.

INSERT YOUR TEXT HERE, RESPONDING TO EACH OF THE ABOVE POINTS

**Partnership**
- List all partner organizations expected to play a key role in the activities or to make cash and/or in-kind contributions.
- Describe the core activity of the partner organizations and their experience related to the research project, such as any efforts to date that the partner organizations have invested toward addressing this problem, the need for this research project and how the topic is relevant and aligned with the partner organizations' activities.
- Explain how each partner organization will be actively involved (through cash and/or in-kind contributions) in co-designing and implementing the research program. Describe the value added through in-kind contributions and how these are important to realizing the project's intended outcomes.
- Outline each partner organization's strategy and capacity to translate the research results into practical application to achieve the desired outcomes and impacts, including any planned knowledge translation activities and integration of the research results into its operations.

INSERT YOUR TEXT HERE, RESPONDING TO EACH OF THE ABOVE POINTS

**Proposal**
- Outline the research objectives. Detail the resources and activities needed to achieve the anticipated results.
- Indicate approximate timelines for the activities to lead to milestones and deliverables using a Gantt chart, table or diagram.
- Explain how sex, gender and diversity have been considered in the research design, if applicable.
- Identify the indicators and methods for monitoring progress during the project and for assessing the outcomes. You may include a chart or table.

INSERT YOUR TEXT HERE, RESPONDING TO EACH OF THE ABOVE POINTS

**Team**
- List the applicant, any co-applicants and key staff of the partner organizations.
- Explain how the knowledge, experience and achievements of these individuals provide the expertise needed to accomplish the project objectives. Discuss the role of each individual and how their contributions, including those of staff from the partner organizations, will be integrated into the project.
- Explain how equity, diversity and inclusion have been considered in the academic team

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Under the "Partnership" heading, applicants must explain how each partner organization has been involved in the co-design of the project and how it will be actively involved in it.

Such an explanation must complement the description of in-kind contributions elsewhere in the application.

Best practices

# Proposal template: Partnerships

Outline each partner organization's strategy and capacity to translate the research results into practical application to achieve the desired outcomes and impacts:

- not just the strategy and capacity to participate in carrying out the project

Under the "Partnership" heading (continued), Applicants must outline each partner organization's strategy and capacity to translate the research results into practical application to achieve the desired outcomes and impacts, not just the partner organization's strategy and capacity to carry out the project.

Under the "Proposal" heading, Applicants must identify indicators and methods for monitoring progress during the project and for assessing the outcomes, not just how progress will be monitored—for example, regular meetings with the partners or an oversight committee—but also what metrics will be measured and monitored during the project and after it is over.

Under the "Training" heading, Applicants must describe how the project and the partnership offer opportunities for enriched training experiences. Applicants must discuss the nature of planned interactions between trainees and partner organizations.

Best practices

**Proposal template:**
**Training –**
**Equity Diversity Integration (EDI)**

Applicants must describe specific,
**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.

**Context**

- NSERC is committed to promoting
  the integration of EDI 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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Let's review the topic of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the training plan.

As you know, NSERC is committed to supporting the integration of EDI in research as well as in training. Therefore, we expect the proposal to include a detailed training plan that explains how specific practices that consider EDI will be implemented during the project to ensure an inclusive research and training environment.

This is part of the evaluation criteria, and NSERC will not accept the application if the training plan does not adequately demonstrate that EDI has been appropriately taken into consideration.

Best practices

## Proposal template:
## Training – EDI

Describe what **specific** initiatives, measures, actions will be put in place in the project's training plan to support EDI in the team

Ⓧ

- **Do not** provide vague or generic statements (e.g., "in future hiring, EDI will be considered" or "the university is committed to EDI")

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

- **Do not** refer to EDI general best practices only

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

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While addressing the consideration of EDI in the training plan:

Avoid vague or generic statements—such as "in future hiring, EDI will be considered" or "the university is committed to EDI." Such statements will not be considered sufficient and will lead to the application not being accepted, as one subcriteria will not be appropriately addressed.

Do not simply refer to the team's current diversity. Please keep in mind that how an individual self-identifies is considered personal and confidential information. Also, statements on commitments to future team composition are not needed, such as "EDI is not about hiring more of… and less of…" or "EDI is not about exclusion, but about inclusion".

Instead of EDI general best practices, you should describe, for example, your plans for promoting participation from a diverse group of highly qualified personnel (HQP), equitable recruitment processes, mentorship approaches and other initiatives aimed at fostering an inclusive research and training environment.

Also, if the university has an EDI policy or program, the proposal should not simply refer to it. Rather, you must describe specific actions or initiatives that have or will be put in place in the context of the project's training plan.

**Proposal template:**
**Training – EDI**

**Resources**

- 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

The Alliance website points to several resources that provide an overview of EDI, guidance on how to consider EDI in the training plan and some examples of practices to consider implementing. We invite you to review these resources.

Best practices

# Equipment requests in Alliance applications

Need must be well justified.

Equipment must be **essential** to the project's success and not available or accessible at university or through the partner organization(s).

No set limit for budget portion that may be dedicated to equipment, but **Alliance is not an infrastructure & equipment grant.**

( ! )

If total expected equipment cost (including the operation and maintenance) **exceeds $400K** over project's duration:

- you should apply for an alternate source of funding such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation's (CFI's) John R. Evans Leaders Fund.

- NSERC and CFI have developed a joint application and review procedures for these cases.

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On another topic, we would like to remind you that the costs of equipment may be included in an Alliance application, provided that the equipment is:
- essential to achieving the objectives of the research project
- incremental to the equipment already available at the university or at the partner organization's location.

You must justify the need for the equipment. Even though there is no set limit for the budget fraction that may be dedicated to equipment, it is important to keep in mind that Alliance grants are not equipment or infrastructure grants.

If the total expected equipment cost, including operation and maintenance, exceeds $400,000 over the project's duration, you should apply for an alternative source of funding, such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation's (CFI's) John R. Evans Leaders Fund.
- NSERC and CFI have developed a joint application and review procedure for such cases.
- Contact NSERC or CFI for more details.
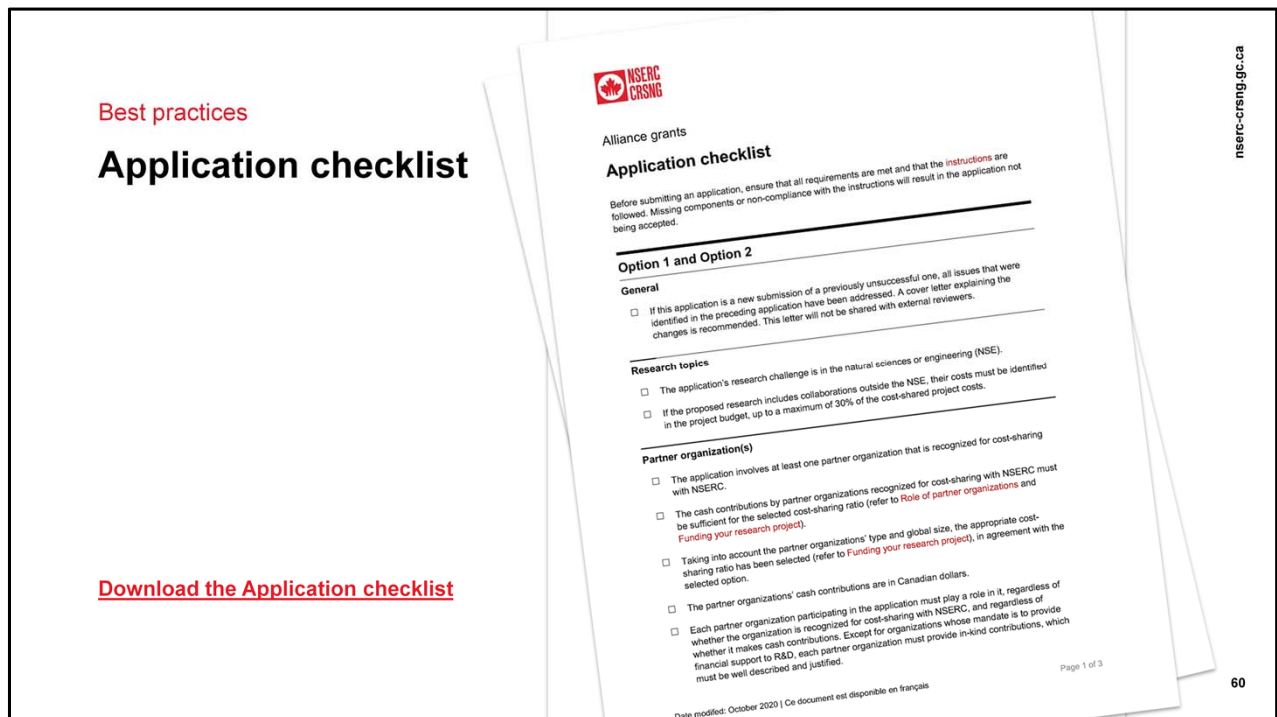
The next four slides present a checklist to help you ensure that your application is complete and that all important points are covered before submitting it, whether it is for Option 1 or Option 2.

The checklist items are grouped by topic, such as the application's subject matter, partner organizations, cost-sharing, expenditures, etc. Let's review this checklist topic by topic.

Best practices
**Application checklist**
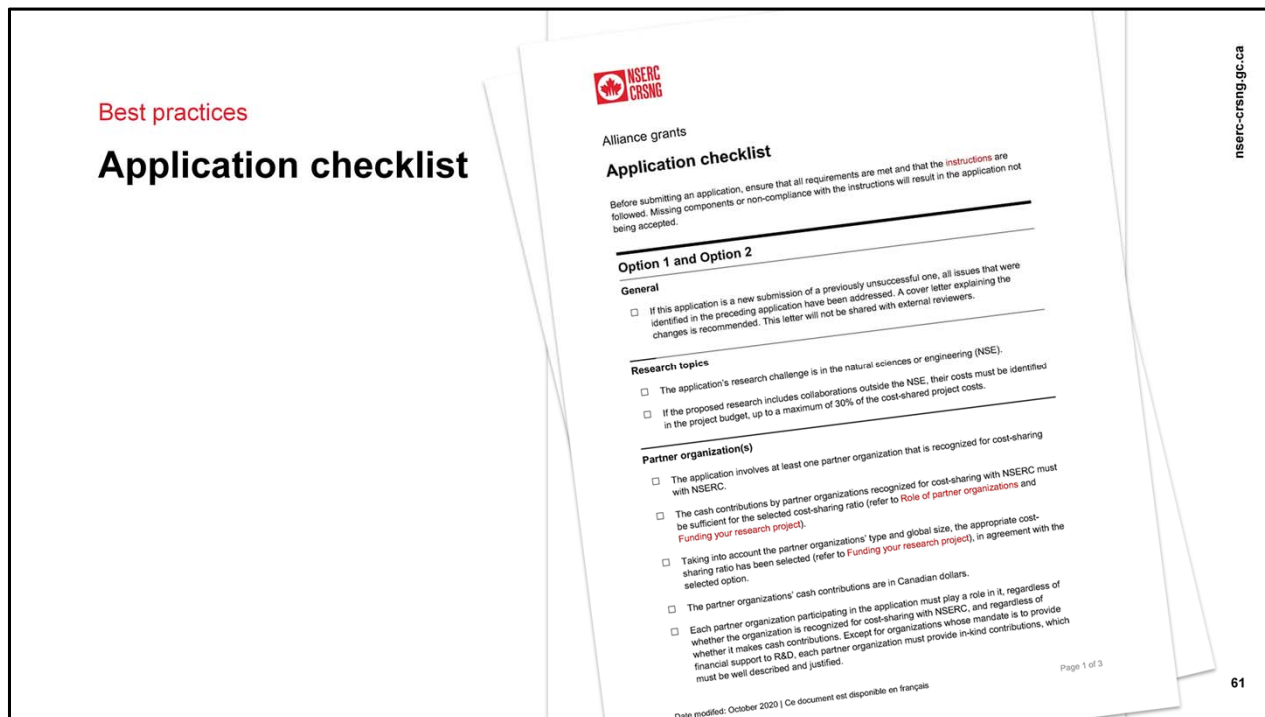
The general section applies to applications submitted under Option 1 or Option 2.

The checklist includes hyperlinks to several webpages that provide more details on specific topics. We strongly encourage applicants to read the information and instructions available on those webpages.

The first item on the checklist pertains to the situation where the application is a new submission of a previously unsuccessful one. In such a case, it is be important for the applicant to address all the issues that were identified in the preceding application. To explain the changes that have been made, we recommend that the applicant includes a cover letter. Such a letter would be very helpful for NSERC to understand what has been changed since the last submission in order to determine whether the application should receive a new assessment.

Next on the checklist, the applicant is reminded that the application's research challenge must be in the NSE. In case the project requires collaborations outside the NSE, their costs should not exceed 30 per cent of the project's cost-shared budget. In such a case, it would be important to identify the non-NSE activities and the related expenses in the budget.

The next section of the checklist focuses on the partners and their contributions. Here are questions and points applicants should pay attention to:

- Does the application involve at least one partner organization whose cash contributions can be recognized for cost-sharing with NSERC?
- Are there sufficient cash contributions from recognized partner organizations for the selected cost-sharing ratio?
- Is the selected cost-sharing ratio appropriate based on the partner organizations' global sizes and sectors, in agreement with the selected option?
- Are the cash contributions committed in Canadian dollars? NSERC will base its cost-sharing calculations on cash contributions in Canadian dollars. In the case of recognized multinational or foreign partner companies, fluctuations in exchange rates over the course of a project would be their responsibility to manage in order to meet their cash commitments in Canadian dollars.
- Does each partner organization participating in the project play an active role in it? Such active involvement is required even if the partner organization is not recognized for cost-sharing with NSERC, with the exception of funding organizations (e.g., other provincial or federal funding agencies) providing financial support to the project. Is the partner organization's role clearly explained in the proposal? Partner organizations that are not involved at all are not accepted and would lead to the application not being accepted.

**Best practices**

# Application checklist

☐ For each partner organization, the application includes a completed Partner organization form, including the one-page partner organization profile. Support letters are not allowed and will be removed from the application.

☐ For each partner organization with fewer than five full-time employees, the application includes a completed Partner organization supplemental information questionnaire, unless the partner has already provided that document within the last 12 months.

**Budget**

☐ For **Option 1**, each annual amount requested from NSERC is not less than $20,000 and does not exceed $1,000,000. For **Option 2**, each annual amount requested from NSERC is more than $30,000 and does not exceed $100,000.

☐ Cash contributions provided in advance by partner organizations, and recognized and necessary in the cost-sharing calculation with NSERC, were not spent in part or in total prior to three months before the application submission date.

☐ All planned expenditures are eligible (refer to the Tri-agency guide on financial administration), well described and well justified.

☐ In case of a project involving multiple partner organizations and/or universities, project management costs do not exceed 10% of the total direct research costs.

**Proposal**

☐ The proposal makes use of the template presentation structure, without altering the headings, text, bullet points or margins, while complying with the NSERC online presentation and attachment standards. In particular, all text must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, and margins must be set at a minimum of ¾-inch (1.87 cm).

☐ The length of the proposal does not exceed the **total page limit** outlined in the instructions. This limit depends on the average annual request from NSERC. Excess pages will be removed, and if this results in information addressing one or more evaluation criteria or sub-criteria being truncated, NSERC will not accept the application.

☐ The proposal addresses **each** of the requirements listed in the bullet points included in the proposal template under each heading. Failure to do so will result in the application being found incomplete and not accepted.

☐ In the case of a large project (average of more than $300,000 per year requested from NSERC) involving multiple partner organizations and/or universities, you may add up to three additional pages **strictly for the purposes** of detailing topics such as project management, governance structure and university support. These pages must be included under the *Team* heading. If any of these additional pages are used for purposes other than those prescribed, NSERC will remove them, and if this results in information addressing one or more evaluation criteria or sub-criteria being truncated, NSERC will not accept the application.

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Continuing with partner organizations:

- Did each partner organization complete a Partner Organization Form, including the free-form one-page Partner Organization Profile? Information provided in the profile will contribute to the application's merit assessment, so it is essential for partners to take the time to carefully address the two specific elements that are required for this profile. These elements are presented in the instructions to partners on how to complete their profile. The information provided should complement that included by the applicant in the proposal. It is important to note that we are not requesting a copy-paste of generic information found on the partner's website. Also, the profile is not a substitute for a support letter similar to what NSERC used to request with previous partnerships programs.
- In a case where the partner organization has fewer than five full-time employees, does the application include the partner organization supplemental information questionnaire? This questionnaire helps us to assess the organization's capacity to effectively participate in the project and exploit the research results. Note that we no longer require partner organizations to have been in operation for at least two years. The onus is on the organizations to make a compelling case that they have the resources and capacity to actively collaborate and to effectively exploit the research results.

The next section focuses on the project budget:

- Remember that annual amounts requested from NSERC under Option 1 must not be lower than $20,000 or exceed $1 million; these limits are not averages. Applications with any annual requested amount lower than $20,000 or above $1 million will not be accepted.
- For Option 2, annual amounts requested from NSERC must be higher than $30,000, up to $100,000. By implementing these limits at this time for Option 2, we will treat all applications in the same way, using peer review. These limits may change in the future, in which case we will inform the community.
- Partner organizations' cash contributions spent on the project up to three months prior to the application submission date would be recognized for cost-sharing. Please keep in mind that using the partners' funds ahead of NSERC's decision is at the applicant's and the university's risk.
- Of course, all proposed expenditures must be eligible. You should consult the Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration  in case of a doubt, or contact us.
- In case of a large project involving multiple partner organizations and/or universities, project management costs can be included, as long as they do not exceed 10 per cent of the total direct research costs.


The next section is about the proposal:

The  applicant is reminded of the basic requirements:
- Use the template presentation structure, without altering the headings, text, bullet points or margins, while complying with the NSERC Online Presentation and Attachment Standards. In particular, all text must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, and margins must be set at a minimum of ¾-inch.
- Do not exceed the total page limit allowed for the average annual request. Excess pages will be removed, and if this results in information addressing one or more evaluation criteria or subcriteria being truncated, NSERC will not accept the application.
- Address each of the requirements listed in the bullet points included in the proposal template under each heading. Failure to do so will result in the application being found incomplete and thus not accepted.

Any additional document that is not requested by NSERC will be removed before proceeding with the application's assessment.

In case of a large project, with average annual request of more than $300,000, involving multiple partner organizations and/or universities, it is possible to add up to

three more pages under the "Team" heading strictly for the purposes of detailing topics such as project management, governance structure and university support. If any of these additional pages are used for purposes other than those prescribed, NSERC will remove them, and if this results in information addressing one or more evaluation criteria or subcriteria being truncated, NSERC will not accept the application.

# Application checklist

☐ The proposal includes a training plan that is principally intended for undergraduate, graduate or postdoctoral trainees.

☐ The proposal includes a detailed **training plan** describing **specific practices** that consider equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and that will be **implemented** during the project to ensure an inclusive research and training environment. Generic statements or references to the current environment in the applying team will not be considered sufficient. If the training plan does not adequately demonstrate that EDI has been appropriately taken into consideration, NSERC will not accept the application.

**Applicant(s) and co-applicant(s)**

☐ The Form 100A and the CCV for the applicant and each co-applicant are complete and up to date, complying with the instructions (Form 100A; CCV). Failure to provide Form 100A and CCV that comply with the instructions will result in the application being found incomplete and not accepted.

☐ If you deem it relevant, the application can include biographical sketches or CVs for collaborators and/or key staff of the partner organizations. Such biographical sketches or CVs must comply with the instructions and not exceed **two pages** each in length. Excess pages will be removed.

**Option 2 only**

**Applicant and co-applicant(s)**

☐ The applicant and the co-applicants have not submitted an Alliance Option 2 application that NSERC accepted to proceed to the Public impact value proposition (PIVP) selection committee step in the past 12 months.

**Partner organization(s)**

☐ None of the partner organizations (or any of their divisions, subsidiaries, agencies) that are recognized for cost-sharing have been part of more than one Alliance Option 2 application that NSERC accepted to proceed to the PIVP selection committee step in the past 12 months.

**Proposal**

☐ The PIVP section of the proposal template is complete. This will be the primary source of information for the Option 2 PIVP selection committee, which will determine if the application meets the requirements for Option 2 and if it can proceed to peer review for its overall merit assessment, similar to Option 1. The remainder of the proposal, exclusive of the PIVP, includes all relevant information necessary for its evaluation through peer review.

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Continuing our review of requirements for the proposal:

- The proposal must include a training component principally intended for undergraduate, graduate or postdoctoral trainees. That is, trainees cannot be exclusively research professionals. Please note that reviewers will assess the project's opportunities for enriched learning experiences for the trainees to develop research and professional skills.
- The training plan must also include details on specific EDI practices that the applicants intend to implement during the project to ensure an inclusive research and training environment. Generic statements or a reference to the current environment of the applying team, even if it is very positive, would be insufficient. If the training plan does not adequately demonstrate that EDI has been appropriately taken into consideration, NSERC will not accept the application.

The next part of the checklist deals with the applicants and co-applicants.

- The applicant and each co-applicant, if any, must provide an up-to-date Form 100A and an up-to-date CCV for the application to be considered complete.
- Biographical sketches of up to two pages in length for can be provided for any formal collaborators or key staff from the participating partner organizations. Such bio-sketches are not mandatory, but they can be useful to describe the expertise and experience of these individuals. Their inclusion may allow the proposal's team section to focus on describing their roles in the project.

The last part of the list deals with Option 2 requirements.

- The applicant and the co-applicants must not have submitted an Alliance Option 2 application in the past 12 months—whether funded or not funded. Applications that were not accepted following the administrative assessment do not count against this limit.
- None of the partner organizations must have been part of more than one application in the past 12 months—here too, funded or not funded counts.
- Finally, the three pages for the PIVP must be carefully prepared, ensuring that all the points listed in the PIVP section of the proposal template are fully addressed. It is important to keep in mind that the PIVP will be the basis of the recommendation by the PIVP selection committee as to whether the proposal meets Option 2's specific characteristics and can proceed to the full merit assessment stage. Also, one must ensure that the rest of the proposal is complete and independent from the PIVP. If the application is selected and proceeds to the full merit assessment stage, it will be evaluated in the same manner as all other Alliance applications. The PIVP section will be removed and reviewers will not have access to it.

Best practices

# Resources

[Instructions for completing an application](#)

[Recognition and role of partner organizations](#)

[Partner organization self-assessment tool](#)

[Funding your research project (cost-sharing options)](#)

[Alliance grant application checklist](#)

[Equity, diversity and inclusion in your training plan](#)

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Several resources are available on the Alliance website. On this slide, we highlight the most important ones. We encourage you to regularly consult these resources as we strive to update them to provide further clarification wherever needed.

Best practices

# Useful links

- Alliance grants website
- Alliance research topics
- Role of partner organizations
- Funding and cost-sharing
- Instructions for completing an Alliance grant application
- Alliance proposal template

- Review mechanisms and evaluation criteria
- Merit indicators
- Alliance resources
- Alliance FAQ
- Use of grant funds

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This slide includes hyperlinks to webpages and documents where you will find comprehensive information about Alliance grants and the requirements for submitting a complete application.

# Communicating
# & reporting

To wrap up this presentation, we will describe the new ways that NSERC is communicating its Alliance grant decisions, as well as the reporting requirements for these grants.

Communicating & reporting

# Communicating Alliance decisions

**Applicant**: individual notification of decisions through SharePoint library

**Research Grants Office**: reports through GSAP every two weeks

The terms and conditions specify that NSERC will be requesting from grantees the contact information of the students, fellows and other research trainees paid out of their Alliance grants. NSERC may contact the trainees to gather information for statistical and reporting purposes. **Note that grantees have the obligation to inform trainees in this respect.**

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NSERC communicates its decisions electronically.

- Applicants will receive our notifications of decisions and all other pertinent documents (e.g., terms and conditions, reviewer reports, message to applicant) through individual SharePoint libraries. The onus will be on applicants to share NSERC's decision with the partner organizations and any co-applicants.
- University Research Grants Offices will receive reports every two weeks listing our decisions through the *grants and scholarships administrative portal* (GSAP).

The terms and conditions of Alliance grants specify that NSERC will be requesting from Alliance grant holders the contact information of the students, fellows and other research trainees paid out of their Alliance grants. NSERC may contact the trainees to gather information for statistical and reporting purposes. Grantees must inform trainees that NSERC may contact them and why.
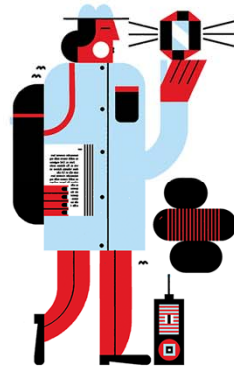
Also, our reporting requirements for Alliance grants have been streamlined in comparison to what we used to request for previous university partnerships programs. This will substantially reduce the burden on the universities' finance offices, on the researchers and on the partners.

- In particular, yearly status reports will be done online and should take less than 10 minutes to complete through answering a few questions.
- For projects whose duration is of three years or more, one mid-term progress report would be requested.
- Lastly, a final report will be requested at the end of each projects.

# Conclusion

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Alliance grants provide you with **flexibility in building partnerships** that will effectively generate new knowledge and accelerate the application of research results for the benefit of Canadians.

NSERC Alliance grants

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To conclude, we would like to emphasize that Alliance grants provide you with flexibility in building partnerships that will generate new knowledge effectively and accelerate the application of research results for the benefit of Canadians.

"

Make Alliance your partnerships program to go **beyond** what would have been possible to accomplish using our previous programs, and to have an impact on the economic prosperity, environmental quality & social well-being of Canadians.

NSERC Alliance grants

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We invite you to make Alliance your partnerships program. Use it to go beyond what would have been possible to accomplish using our previous programs and to have an impact on the economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social well-being of Canadians.
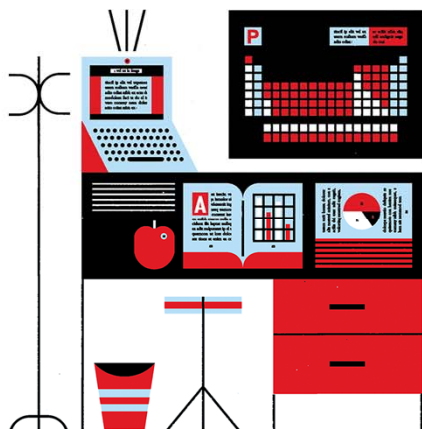
**Questions?**

**NSERC Alliance grants**
1-877-767-1767
alliance@nserc-crsng.gc.ca

**Connect with us**
 @nserc_crsng
 facebook.com/nserccanada

nserc-crsng.gc.ca

NSERC Regional Offices
Toll-free: 1-877-767-1767
nserc-atlantic@nserc-crsng.gc.ca
nserc-ontario@nserc-crsng.gc.ca
nserc-pacific@nserc-crsng.gc.ca
nserc-prairies@nserc-crsng.gc.ca
nserc-quebec@nserc-crsng.gc.ca