NSERC CRSNG

NSERC
Alliance grants
Canada's research partnerships program

Preparing an Alliance application

April 2020

- Thank you for your interest in Alliance grants.
- In this presentation, we will provide you with information to help you prepare your Alliance grant application.
- If you have questions after reading the presentation, we invite you to contact us by email or phone. Please refer to our contact information on the last slide.

Outline

- **Alliance grants: objectives and options**
- **Alliance option 1**
- **Alliance option 2**
- **Alliance grant applications: best practices**
- **Alliance grants: what's next**

- In this presentation, we will
  - ➢ present a brief overview of Alliance grants
  - ➢ discuss the two options that you may consider while building your partnership around your Alliance project
  - ➢ 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 over several months, in particular what elements an Alliance application must include for it 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.

Alliance grants: Objectives

- Replace prior university partnerships programs.

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

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

- **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.

> Enable researchers, through such partnerships, to go **beyond** what would have been possible for them to accomplish using our prior programs.
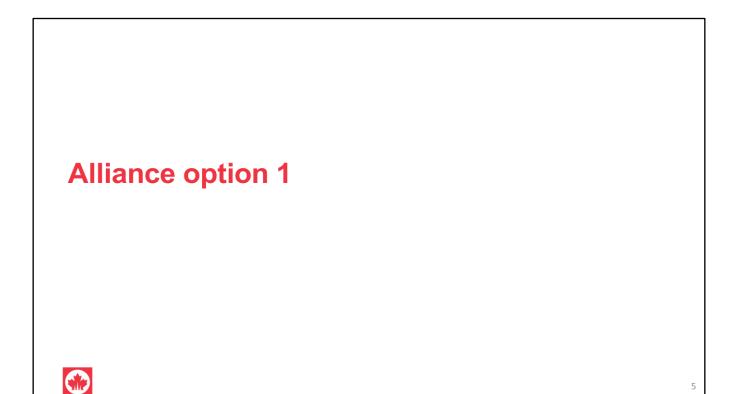
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- As you may know, Alliance grants replace a number of previous university partnerships programs.

- Alliance grants support projects of varying scale and complexity whose main thrust must be in the natural sciences and engineering (NSE). For example, the 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, the main thrust of an Alliance project must be in the NSE; still 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.

- 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 using our prior programs.

Alliance grants: Options

- **1 funding opportunity, 2 options**
  - option 1
  - option 2
- **The 2 options have the same**
  - objectives
  - evaluation criteria
  - peer review process for overall merit assessment
  - academic community and types of partner organizations served
  - requirements for the recognition of partner organizations

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- Alliance grants offer two options , option 1 and option 2, for you to consider when building your partnership around your project.

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

- 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.

- Also, under both options, the grants 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.

Alliance option 1

Let's now have a closer look at Alliance option 1 and its specific requirements.

Alliance option 1

- **Funding: $20,000 to $1M per year; from 1 to 5 years**
  - The limits of the funding range are **not** yearly averages.
- **Cost-sharing: 50% to 66.7% from NSERC**
  - Determined by **type** of partnership and **global** size of the partner organization(s) **recognized** for cost-sharing.
- **Partner organizations**
  - Can be from private, public or not-for-profit sector.
  - **At least 1** must be **recognized for cost-sharing** and must 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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- Under this option, NSERC would provide annual financial support ranging from $20,000 to $1 million for a duration extending from one to five years. It is important to note that the limits of this funding range are not yearly averages. Any yearly instalment of an Alliance grant will not be smaller than $20,000 or larger than $1 million.

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

- 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. On the next slide, we will summarize the situations for which each level of cost-sharing applies.

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

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

- Each partner organization must be involved in the project and contribute to its success.

- At least one partner organization must have the ability to exploit the research results and to achieve the desired outcomes.

Alliance option 1

- **Cost-sharing: 50% from NSERC (1:1 ratio)**
  - ➢ **large organizations (≥ 500 employees globally) as a sole partner organization or in partnership exclusively with other large organizations within the same sector (private, public or not-for-profit)**

- **Cost-sharing: 66.7% from NSERC (2:1 ratio)**
  - ➢ **large organizations (≥ 500 employees globally) in partnership with other large organizations from a different sector or in partnership with small and medium-sized organizations from any sector**
  - ➢ **small and medium-sized organizations from any sector as a sole partner organization or in partnership with organizations of any size from any sector**

    The cost-sharing is calculated based on the sum of cash contributions from all recognized partner organizations.

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- Let's review the situations for which each level of cost-sharing applies.
- 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).
- The 66.7 per cent or 2:1 cost-sharing ratio applies to
  - ➢ large organizations, with 500 or more employees globally, in partnership with other large organizations from a different sector or in partnership with small and medium-sized organizations from any sector
  - ➢ small and medium-sized organizations from any sector as a sole partner organization or in partnership with organizations of any size from any sector
- The cost-sharing is calculated on the basis of the sum of the cash contributions from all the recognized partner organizations involved in the project.
- Note that token partners that are involved to simply 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

- **Application**
  - ➢ **application template**
  - ➢ **NSERC's On-line System**
  - ➢ **apply at any time**
  - ➢ **no limit on number of applications**

  - • **Follow instructions.**
  - • **Keep template's headings and bullets.**
  - • **Do not change font, font size or margins.**
  - • **Keep within page limit (includes template's headings and bullets).**

- **Evaluation**
  - ➢ **administrative assessment: completeness and compliance**
    - ► *NSERC*
    - ► *application not accepted if not complete or not compliant*
  - ➢ **merit assessment: to determine priority for funding on a competitive basis**
    - ► *peer review, NSERC*

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- Once you are ready to submit your option 1 Alliance application
  - ➢ Fill out the proposal template following the instructions for completing an Alliance grant application.
  - ➢ Submit your completed application and supporting documents, including an up-to-date Personal Data Form (Form 100A) with the Common CV (CCV) attachment for the applicant and all co-applicants, through NSERC's On-line System.
- Note that you can apply at any time throughout the year and that there is no limit on the number of applications you can submit to Alliance under option 1.
- Once NSERC receives an Alliance application, it first undertakes 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.
- 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. Different mechanisms may be used for the merit assessment stage. We discuss these on the next slide.

Alliance option 1

- **Merit assessment: process**

Small project	Medium project	Large project
Annual request of $20k or more, up to average of $30k	Average annual request of more than $30k, up to $300k	Average annual request of more than $300k, up to $1M
NSERC: evaluation supported by existing NSERC peer review (applicant and co-applicant[s]) **OR** External reviewers with expertise directly related to the proposal, if no existing NSERC peer review evidence	External reviewers with expertise directly related to the proposal	Ad hoc review committee with expertise directly related to the proposal *NSERC does not hold evaluation site visits for Alliance grants*

- 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. In the absence of such NSERC peer review, 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 larger 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 its 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 prior university partnerships programs usually allowed applicants to provide new information and clarifications, which added to their proposal. With Alliance grants providing funding on a competitive basis, it is important to avoid giving an advantage, or the perception thereof, to any application through the provision of additional information.
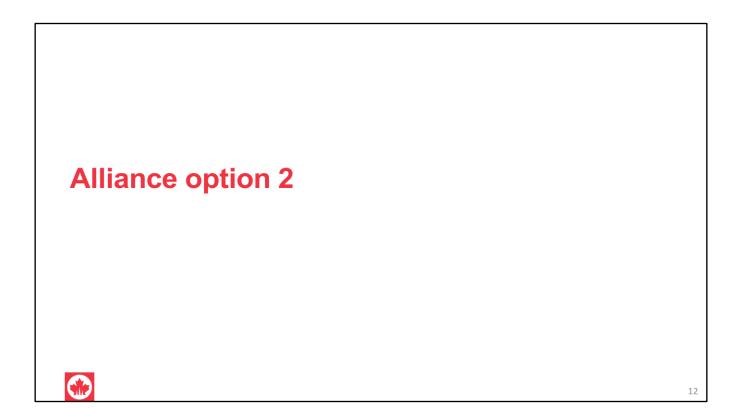
Alliance option 1

- **Merit assessment: evaluation criteria** (each with multiple subcriteria for a total of 11)
  - ➢ **relevance and outcomes**
  - ➢ **partnership**
  - ➢ **quality of the proposal**
  - ➢ **training**
- **Merit assessment: to determine the application's overall merit**
  - ➢ **NSERC uses merit indicators to rate each subcriterion/criterion for each application**
- **Funding**
  - ➢ **applications selected for funding by NSERC on a competitive basis**
  - ➢ **based on applications' merit ratings**

- 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 meritoriously address all of the criteria and subcriteria to be considered for funding.
- NSERC assigns a rating to each subcriterion or criterion using merit indicators.
- NSERC determines priority for funding for all applications based on the merit ratings they receive.

Alliance option 1

Merit indicators

1. Relevance and Outcomes

		Exceptional	Exceeds	Meets	Does not satisfy
1.1	Significance of the intended outcomes and of the economic, social and/or environmental impact for Canada.	The proposed outcomes are of **exceptional importance** to Canada and may also be important **internationally**. This research will **overcome** knowledge gaps to develop new and innovative policies, standards, products, services, processes or technologies in Canada. The expected outcomes will be of the **highest impact** for Canadians.	The proposed outcomes are **very important** to Canada. This research will **address** knowledge gaps to develop new and innovative policies, standards, products, services, processes or technologies in Canada. The expected outcomes will have **high impact** for Canadians.	The proposed outcomes are **important** to Canada. This research will **contribute to** addressing knowledge gaps to develop new and innovative policies, standards, products, services, processes or technologies in Canada. The expected outcomes will have **impact** for Canadians.	The proposal did not adequately establish why the topic is important to Canada. It did not sufficiently identify how the research will address knowledge gaps related to developing new and innovative policies, standards, products, services, processes or technologies. It did not adequately identify how outcomes will have impact for Canadians.
1.2	The need for original research to address the topic and the potential for generating new scientific knowledge.	The proposal demonstrates that the topic will be addressed through **exceptionally innovative research**. The research has **potential to contribute to a scientific breakthrough**.	The proposal demonstrates that the topic will be addressed through **highly original research**. The research has **potential for a significant advance in the field**.	The proposal demonstrates that the topic will be addressed through **original research**. The research includes **some concepts or directions that may lead to an advance in the field**.	The proposal did not sufficiently demonstrate that the topic will be addressed through original research or is not well positioned within the state-of-the-art. It is not clear how the research will lead to new concepts or directions.
1.3	Extent to which the strategy to apply the research results is likely to achieve the intended outcomes.	A **comprehensive** strategy indicates how the partners will translate the research results into application, such that the outcomes and impacts are **very likely to happen**.	A **clearly defined** strategy indicates how the partners will translate the research results into application, such that the outcomes and impacts are **likely to happen**.	A strategy **may lead** the partners to translating the research results into application, such that the outcomes and impacts **may happen**.	The strategy to translate the research results into application is not convincingly presented, such that the outcomes and impacts are unlikely to happen.

- 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.
- 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."

Alliance option 2

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

Alliance option 2

What is particular compared to option 1?

- 3 specific characteristics
- 90% to 100% funding from NSERC, if the characteristics are met
- additional section in the application template
- 3-stage assessment process

- As stated earlier, option 2 is not a different funding opportunity.
- Rather, under option 2, Alliance grants provide increased NSERC financial support, between 90 and 100 per cent of direct research costs, in order to encourage NSE research endeavours aiming to address a societal challenge, with three explicit characteristics that must be met, which we will discuss over the next few slides.
- Applicants will be asked to provide information demonstrating that their proposal meets option 2's three characteristics in a distinct section of the application template.
- NSERC will determine if applications satisfactorily meet the three characteristics through an additional stage in the assessment process.

Alliance option 2 – Characteristics

3 specific characteristics

- **societal impact**
- **making connections**
- **broad outcomes**

- Under Alliance option 2, projects must satisfy three characteristics:
  - ➤ societal impact
  - ➤ making connections
  - ➤ broad outcomes
- Let's review each of these characteristics in more detail.

Alliance option 2 – Characteristics

Societal impact

- **generates societal benefits** (e.g., improving quality of life, health and safety, public goods and resources, prosperity, sustainability)

- **tackles national or regional priorities or global issues where Canada is involved**

- **builds capacity to transform a sector and its practices**

- **provides evidence for new policies or regulations**

- **solves an issue affecting a whole business area or creates a new area of the economy**

  - **results in new technical knowledge and societal impact**
  - **more than improving a product/service for increased profit**
  - **impacts beyond near-term economic success**
  - **outcomes beyond the partner organizations**

The first characteristic is societal impact. To satisfy this characteristic

- The project may 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 where Canada is involved.

- It may build capacity to transform a sector and become a game changer.

- It may support governments in delivering on their policy or regulation mandate.

- It may pave the way to a new area of the economy or overcome an issue affecting an entire business area.

The main message for you to take 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 – Characteristics

Making connections

- **meaningful partnership**
- **working with end users and implementers** ➡ **needs-driven**
- **societal perspectives/skill sets** ➡ **merge ideas, overcome barriers and find creative solutions**
- **creates new relationships or builds on existing efforts, and integrates solutions with decision-makers within and across sectors**

➡ **Despite a limited financial contribution:**
- **partners are active and highly committed**
- **valuable opportunity to connect with others**
- **partners are committed to sharing results beyond their own organizations**

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The second characteristic is making connections.

- As in any Alliance project, the expectation is that there is a strong and meaningful partnership with all the key partners needed to conduct the research and to apply it.

- Although they need not be formal project partners, we insist on the presence of key end users and implementers to ensure that the project is driven by a real need to overcome a societal issue.

- We also expect the partners to have the knowledge, the skills and the relevant experience, as well as the appropriate network and connections with the right organizations to stir the right ideas, break the barriers and lay the ground for creative solutions.

Alliance option 2 – Characteristics

Broad outcomes

- **outcomes benefit beyond the partner organizations**
- **results accessible by all stakeholders in society**
- **strategy to raise awareness on the resulting products, services or policies among potential users**
- **intellectual property management not a barrier**

The third characteristic is broad outcomes.

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

- Therefore, the results must be shared and accessible in as many formats as possible, and the applicants must have a strategy to broadly raise awareness on the resulting products, services or policies so that any interested party may have access to them and potentially use them. In developing this strategy, it would be important to take into account the fact that scientific publications may not be accessible to non-technical users.

- 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.

Alliance option 2 – Characteristics

When to consider option 2

- challenge in the NSE
- important unmet societal need
- expected societal impact
- barriers preventing the research from happening
- financial support scarce or not available

AND

- A viable solution can be envisioned to significantly contribute to long-term societal benefits.
- **Higher NSERC support is key to enabling these advances.**

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- On this slide, we list the elements that would justify considering option 2. We invite you to carefully review these elements.

- 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 the 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 support 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 outlook for societal impact is high.

- It is understood that the ultimate goals may not be achieved in the scope and timeline of the proposed project. Even in this case, option 2 can provide support to allow researchers to make decisive advances toward these goals.

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Alliance option 2 – Characteristics

Option 2 is not

- **Engage grants or Strategic Partnership grants**

- **a means to provide a test ground to establish new partnerships**

- **a means to offset the cost of research where investments are available**

- **a means to address research challenges for the strict benefit of the partner organizations**

- Now that we have explained what Alliance option 2 is, let's highlight what it is not.

- Option 2 is not Engage grants or Strategic Partnership grants.
    - ➢ Engage grants successfully accomplished what they were intended for: 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 were successful in supporting researchers to undertake R&D in set broad target areas that were updated once every five years.

- Alliance grants encourage a broader variety of partnerships to undertake innovative research and generate impactful results. With this new flexibility and expanded horizon, option 2 focuses on supporting R&D endeavours that aim to effectively address societal challenges beyond the partner organizations and near-term economic success.

- As mentioned earlier, under option 2, NSERC will provide increased financial support toward the project's direct costs.

- NSERC will cover 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, it is necessary that 10 per cent of the costs be covered by cash contributions from partner organizations that are recognized for cost-sharing.

- Even though NSERC may cover 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.

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

- During the initial launching phase of option 2, the annual amount requested from NSERC must be higher than $30,000, up to $100,000. The duration of projects can range from one to five years.

- Also, during this initial phase, the number of applications a researcher, as applicant or co-applicant, can submit is limited to one per 12-month period, while the number of applications any partner organization can be involved in is limited to two per 12-month period. Please note that an organization is meant to include all of its divisions, subsidiaries or agencies.

- 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 will be revisited at a later time.

Alliance option 2 – Application

Application process

- **same as for option 1 (On-line System)**

Differences in application

- **cost-sharing ratio (90% or 100%)**
- **Public Impact Value Proposition (PIVP) section in the proposal**
  - ➢ **must address 5 points to justify fit to option 2's characteristics**
  - ➢ **use up to 3 pages for this section, which comes in addition to the page length for the rest of the proposal, as per instructions**

> - **Keep headings and bullets from the template.**
> - **Do not change font, font size or margins.**
> - **Keep within page limit (which includes template's headings and bullets).**

- The process to submit an Alliance option 2 application is the same as that for option 1.

- Once you are ready to submit your option 2 Alliance application
  - ➢ Fill out the proposal template following the instructions for completing an Alliance grant application.
  - ➢ Submit your completed application and supporting documents, including an up-to-date Personal Data Form (Form 100A) with the CCV attachment for the applicant and all co-applicants, through NSERC's On-line System.

- The main differences in the application are
  - ➢ the necessity to choose the correct cost-sharing ratio (90 per cent or 100 per cent)
  - ➢ the necessity to complete the three-page Public Impact Value Proposition (or PIVP) in the proposal template—there are five points to be addressed within the PIVP. The PIVP three pages do not count against the applicable page length for the rest of the proposal.

- It is important for applicants to not modify the format or font type and size in the PIVP template, as well as to stay within the page limit.

Alliance option 2 – Evaluation process

Assessment

- **administrative assessment – completeness and compliance**
  - ➢ **application not accepted if not complete or not compliant**
- **PIVP selection committee – fit to option 2 characteristics**
  - ➢ **quarterly meetings**
  - ➢ **application will not proceed to next merit assessment stage if characteristics deemed not met**
- **merit assessment – peer review**
  - ➢ **same process as for option 1**
  - ➢ **PIVP section not provided**
- **funding decision**
  - ➢ **same process as for option 1**

PIVP selection committee
- **15 to 20 members**
- **multidisciplinary & multisectoral**
- **broad knowledge and experience**
- **focus on 3-page PIVP section**

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- Once submitted, an option 2 Alliance application undergoes a three-step assessment process.

- The application is first examined by staff. This is the administrative assessment to determine if the application is complete and meets all our requirements.

- If this step is satisfactorily completed, the application is submitted to the PIVP selection committee. This committee will typically have between 15 and 20 members. The members will be selected for their broad knowledge and their multidisciplinary and multisectoral expertise and experience. They will not look at the overall merit of the application against the evaluation criteria. Rather, they will 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.

- The outcome of this assessment stage can be only positive or negative. If it is negative, the application is considered not 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.

- 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. 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.

- Note that the PIVP section will not be shared with external reviewers since the fit to option 2's

characteristics is determined by the PIVP selection committee. It is therefore important to realize that the rest of the proposal must be complete and that applicants may not rely on information presented in the PIVP to help with the overall merit assessment of the application.

- Also, please note that the PIVP selection committee will typically meet quarterly and examine applications that were received up to a month before its meeting date. The committee's membership and meeting dates will be shared with the community.

Best practices for Alliance applications (options 1 & 2)

Let's now discuss best practices applicants should consider while preparing their Alliance application, regardless of the option they consider. Our goal is to help applicants prepare a complete application before submitting it to NSERC.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Almost 1 year of experience …

- many applications have not been accepted

- need to provide further guidance to help applicants submit a complete application

- These best practices are based on what we have learned so far through the delivery of Alliance grants since May 2019.

- Our delivery processes were tested and adjusted over a six-month pilot phase during which option 1 applications requesting $150,000 or more per year were received. Alliance has been fully open for several months.

- We have now awarded several Alliance grants. However, we have noticed that a non-negligible fraction of applications is not accepted at the administrative assessment stage, before even considering the initiation of the merit assessment stage.

- This situation is due to various but recurring reasons, which we present and discuss in subsequent slides.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Main reasons for not accepting applications

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

- not complying with NSERC presentation standards for proposal

- exceeding the total allowed number of pages

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

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

(cont'd)

- 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.

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

Alliance applications – Best practices

Main reasons for not accepting applications (cont'd)

- **inadequate cost-sharing ratio**
- **erroneous recognition of partner organizations' cash contributions in cost-sharing calculations**
- **no in-kind contributions from partner organizations**
- **annual requested amount below $20,000** (this minimum is not an average over the project's duration)
- **inclusion of a letter of support rather than a Partner Organization Form**
- **use of Form 100 free-form section instead of Form 100A; non-compliance with instructions for Form 100A**
- **out-of-date CCV (6 years)**

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- Besides avoiding such oversights, it is important for applicants to carefully read each bullet point in the proposal template and to provide information that effectively addresses all of its elements.
- It is important to realize that every element that is included or that is missing will affect the application's merit assessment.

Alliance grants – Brief overview

Resources on the Alliance website

In particular
- **Recognition and role of partner organizations**
- **Funding your research project (cost-sharing options)**
- **Instructions for completing an application**

NEW
- **Alliance grant application checklist**
- **Equity, diversity and inclusion in your training plan**
- **Partner organization self-assessment tool**

- 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.

- It is important that you take note of three new resources, which were recently made available to the community in light of the experience we gained with the delivery of Alliance applications. We will now discuss these three resources in more detail.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Alliance grant application checklist

ALLIANCE GRANT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Before submitting an application, ensure that all mandatory and optional (when applicable) requirements are effectively addressed, and that the instructions are followed. Missing components or non-compliance with the instructions will result in the application being rejected.

MANDATORY	
	OPTIONAL

OPTION 1 AND OPTION 2

- If this application is a new submission of a previously unsuccessful one, all issues that were identified in the preceding application have been addressed. A cover letter explaining the changes is recommended. This letter would not be shared with external reviewers.
- The application's research challenge is in the natural sciences or engineering (NSE).
- If the proposed research includes collaborations outside the NSE, their costs must be identified in the project budget, up to a maximum of 30% of the cost-shared project costs.
- The application involves at least one partner organization that is recognized for cost-sharing with NSERC.
- The cash contributions by partner organizations recognized for cost-sharing with NSERC must be sufficient for the selected cost-sharing ratio (refer to Role of partner organizations and Funding your research project).
- Taking into account the partner organizations' type and global size, the appropriate cost-sharing ratio has been selected (refer to Funding your research project).
- The partner organizations' cash contributions are in Canadian dollars.
- Each partner organization participating in the application must play a role in it, regardless of whether the organization is recognized for cost-sharing with NSERC, and regardless of whether it makes cash contributions. Except for organizations whose mandate is to provide financial support to R&D, each partner organization must provide in-kind contributions, which must be well described and justified.
- 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.
- 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 not less than $30,000 and does not exceed $100,000 (these limits may be reassessed within 12 months after the launch of Option 2).
- Cash contributions provided in advance by partner organizations, and recognized as 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 Financial Administration Guide), well described and well justified.

(Right column)

- In case of a large project (average of more than $300,000 per year requested from NSERC) involving multiple partner organizations and/or universities, project management costs do not exceed 10% of the total direct research costs.
- 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 reject 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 being rejected.
- In 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 reject the application.
- 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 reject the application.
- 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 being rejected.
- 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

- The applicant and the co-applicants have not submitted an Alliance Option 2 application in the past 12 months (this limit may be reassessed within 12 months after the launch of Option 2).
- 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 in the past 12 months.
- The Public Impact Value Proposition (PIVP) section of the Proposal template is complete. This will be the primary source of information for the Option 2 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, must include all relevant information necessary for its evaluation through peer review.

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- The first new tool that is now available to you is the Alliance grant application checklist, which covers option 1 and option 2.
- In it, items are grouped by topic, such as the application's subject matter, partner organizations, cost-sharing, expenditures, etc. It also makes a distinction between mandatory and optional components of an application.
- Let's review this checklist topic by topic.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Alliance grant application checklist

MANDATORY		
	OPTIONAL	
		OPTION 1 AND OPTION 2
	☐	If this application is a new submission of a previously unsuccessful one, all issues that were identified in the preceding application have been addressed. A cover letter explaining the changes is recommended. This letter would not be shared with external reviewers.
☐		The application's research challenge is in the natural sciences or engineering (NSE).
	☐	If the proposed research includes collaborations outside the NSE, their costs must be identified in the project budget, up to a maximum of 30% of the cost-shared project costs.

- The checklist starts with a general section that applies to applications submitted under option 1 or option 2. You will notice two columns with checkboxes on the left. The darker grey column is for items that are always mandatory, while the lighter grey column indicates items that may be included, depending on the situation.

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

- The first element on the checklist pertains to the situation where the application is a new submission of a previously unsuccessful one. In such a case, it would 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, it is recommended that the applicant include 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. This is a recommendation, though, and not an obligation; therefore the checkbox is in the optional column.

- 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.

Moving down the checklist, we now focus 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?

- 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 an obligation even if the partner organization is not recognized for cost-sharing with NSERC, with the exception of organizations whose mandate is to provide financial support to R&D. 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.

- 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 prior 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 will help us 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.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Alliance grant application checklist

☐		For **Option 1**, <u>each annual amount</u> requested from NSERC is not less than $20,000 and does not exceed $1,000,000. For **Option 2**, <u>each annual amount</u> requested from NSERC is not less than $30,000 and does not exceed $100,000 (these limits may be reassessed within 12 months after the launch of Option 2).
☐		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 Financial Administration Guide), well described and well justified.
	☐	In case of a large project (average of more than $300,000 per year requested from NSERC) involving multiple partner organizations and/or universities, project management costs do not exceed 10% of the total direct research costs.

Moving down the checklist, we now focus on the financial and project management aspects:

- 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.

- During the initial phase of 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 Financial Administration Guide in case of a doubt, or contact us.

- In case of a large project (average annual request of more than $300,000) 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.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Alliance grant application checklist

☐	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 reject 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 being rejected.

Let's now focus on the proposal:

- It is essential that the proposal make 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.

- It is also important that the proposal 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.

- The proposal must 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.

- As indicated earlier, Alliance grants provide funding on a competitive basis. In fairness to all applicants, we cannot accept proposals that do not comply with our requirements.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Alliance grant application checklist

☐	In 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 reject the application.
☐	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 reject the application.

Continuing our review of requirements for the proposal

- 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.

- 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.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Alliance grant application checklist

☐	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 being rejected.
☐	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.

Let's now focus on the participants in the application:

- 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 each individual, can be provided for 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.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Alliance grant application checklist

	OPTION 2 ONLY
☐	The applicant and the co-applicants have not submitted an Alliance Option 2 application in the past 12 months (this limit may be reassessed within 12 months after the launch of Option 2).
☐	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 in the past 12 months.
☐	The Public Impact Value Proposition (PIVP) section of the Proposal template is complete. This will be the primary source of information for the Option 2 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, must include all relevant information necessary for its evaluation through peer review.

Last but not least, let's review together requirements that are specific to option 2:

- 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. We recognize that it may be difficult for large organizations to track the activities of all their divisions, but we rely on them to self-regulate at this stage.

- Finally, the three pages for the PIVP must be carefully prepared, ensuring that all the requests listed in the proposal template in this respect 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.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Alliance proposal template

- On this slide and the next one, we present screen captures of the entirety of 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 against 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" at its top.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Alliance proposal template

> **Remember**
> - Keep headings and bullet points from the template.
> - Do not change font, font size or margins.
> - Keep within page limit (includes template's headings and bullets) – refer to **instructions**.
> - Address **all** of the bullet points' requests.

- Pages used for the References section are not included in the total page count.
- For applications submitted under option 1, it is important to delete the PIVP section.
- Remember
    - Keep all the headings and bullet points.
    - Do not change the font type, the font size or the margins.
    - Keep within the total page limit depending on the application's average annual request.
    - Address all of the bullet points' requests.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Instructions

Proposal sections and length					
	⚠️ Average annual request **Suggested** number of pages per section				
Section	**Percentage of evaluation**	**Up to $30,000/ year*** ⚠️	**Up to $300,000/ year**	**More than $300,000/ year**	**More than $750,000/ year**
Background and expected outcomes	25%	1	2	3	3
Partnership	25%	1	2	3	5
Proposal	25%	1.5	4	5	15
Team		0.5	1	2** ⚠️	4**
Training plan	25%	1	1	2	3
⚠️ **Maximum** number of pages, including NSERC template text					
Total		5	10	15	30

* 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

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- On this slide, we present the table that summarizes the proposal sections and length. This table can be found in the Instructions for completing an Alliance application.
- Note that the lengths of the proposal's various sections 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 set based on the average annual amount requested from NSERC.

- As stated earlier, each partner organization involved in an Alliance proposal must complete the Partner Organization Form, which is a component of the application.

- Once identified and invited by the applicant in the On-line 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 reference to such website is not acceptable.

Alliance applications – Best practices

EDI in your training plan (help guide)

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.

Expectations

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

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Let's now review together the help guide on EDI in the training plan.

- As you know, NSERC is committed to support 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.

- It is important to keep in mind that consideration of EDI in the training plan is part of the evaluation criteria. If the training plan does not adequately demonstrate that EDI has been appropriately taken into consideration, NSERC will not accept the application.

Alliance applications – Best practices

EDI in your training plan (help guide)

Do not

- **provide vague or generic statements.**
  - ➢ **e.g., "in future hiring, EDI will be considered" or "the university is committed to EDI"**
- **refer to the team's current diversity.**
- **refer to EDI general best practices only.**
- **refer to the university's EDI policy alone.**

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

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While addressing the consideration of EDI in the training plan:

- Avoid providing 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 of the 11 subcriteria will not be appropriately addressed.

- Do not refer to the team's current diversity. Please keep in mind that how an individual self-identifies is considered personal and confidential information.

- Instead of EDI general best practices, you should describe, for example, 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, it should describe specific actions or initiatives that have or will be put in place in the context of the project's training plan.

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Alliance applications – Best practices

EDI in your training plan (help guide)

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 guide 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.

Alliance applications – Best practices

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.**

Let's now review together the partner organization self-assessment tool.

- This is an interactive web-based tool that will help partner organizations 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 enables avoiding oversights and getting a quick answer.

- It is important to note that NSERC's final decision on the recognition of a partner's cash contribution is always based on the context of the proposed project.

Alliance applications – Best practices

While addressing <u>all</u> requirements in bullet points, remember to

- under "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?

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To conclude our discussion of best practices while preparing an Alliance application, we would like to highlight a few points that applicants should not forget to carefully address in the proposal.

- Under the "Background and Outcomes" heading, applicants should 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?

Alliance applications – Best practices

While addressing <u>all</u> requirements in bullet points, remember to

- **under "Partnership" 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**

- **under "Partnership" 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, applicants should 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 should complement the description of in-kind contributions in the pertinent section.

- Under the "Partnership" heading, applicants should outline each partner organization's strategy and capacity to translate the research results into practical application to achieve the desired outcomes and impacts. It is important for applicants not to limit their discussion to the partner organization's strategy and capacity to participate in carrying out the project.

Alliance applications – Best practices

While addressing <u>all</u> requirements in bullet points, remember to

- **under "Proposal" identify indicators <u>and</u> methods for monitoring progress during the project and for assessing the outcomes**
  - ➤ **not just how progress will be monitored (e.g., regular meetings with partners, oversight committee), but also what metrics will be measured/monitored**
  - ➤ **during the project and after its completion**

- **under "Training" describe how the project <u>and</u> the partnership offer opportunities for enriched training experiences**
  - ➤ **including the nature of planned interactions with the partners**

- Under the "Proposal" heading, applicants should identify indicators <u>and</u> methods for monitoring progress during the project and for assessing the outcomes.
  - ➤ It is important for applicants not to limit their discussion to 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 should describe how the project and the partnership offer opportunities for enriched training experiences. It is important to discuss the nature of planned interactions with the partners in this respect.

Alliance applications – Best practices

Equipment requests in Alliance applications

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

- No set limit for budget fraction that may be dedicated to equipment, but Alliance grants are **not** infrastructure/equipment grants.

- If total expected equipment cost (incl. 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 **John R. Evans Leaders Fund**.

   - ➢ NSERC and CFI have developed a **joint application and review procedure** for these cases.

- 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.
- Applicants 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 alternate source of funding, such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation's John R. Evans Leaders Fund.
   - ➢ NSERC and CFI have developed a joint application and review procedure for such cases.
   - ➢ You may contact NSERC or CFI for more details.

Useful links

The next slide provides you with hyperlinks to webpages and documents where you will find comprehensive information about Alliance grants and the requirements for submitting a complete application.
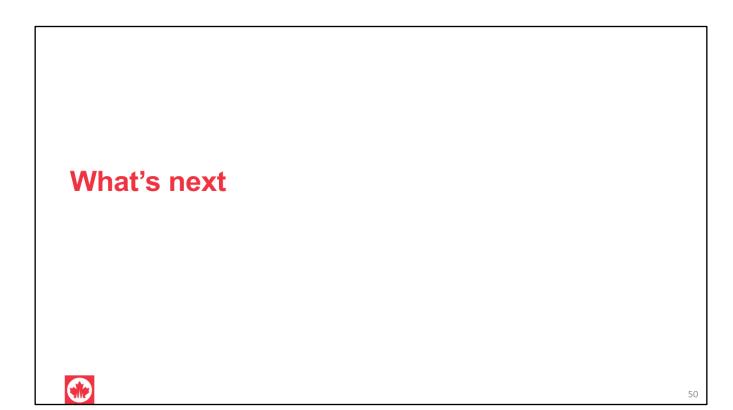
Useful links

- **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**

We would like to highlight again how important it is for you to consult the application checklist and the EDI help guide while developing your Alliance application. They can be found on the Alliance grants Resources webpage.

What's next

To wrap up this presentation, let us share with you information on the new ways NSERC will be communicating its decisions on Alliance grants, as well as on the reporting requirements that will be implemented for these grants.

- By the end of May 2020, we intend to communicate our 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.
    - Research grant offices will receive monthly reports listing our decisions through the grants and scholarships administrative portal (GSAP).
- Furthermore, the terms and conditions of Alliance grants have been updated in order to 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. Note that grantees have the obligation to inform trainees in this respect.
- Also, our reporting requirements for Alliance grants will be streamlined in comparison to what we used to request for prior 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. At the end of the projects, a final report will be requested.
- We will provide you with more information on the reporting requirements as we get closer to the implementation stage.

Alliance grants – Yours to actively use!

- **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.**

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

- To conclude, we would like to emphasize that 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.
- We invite you to make Alliance your partnerships program and to actively use it to go beyond what would have been possible to accomplish using our prior programs, and to have an impact on the economic prosperity, environmental quality and social well-being of Canadians.

Thank you!

For any questions, please contact us

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