

Campus Alberta Small Business Engagement (CASBE) program

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About Alberta Innovates

Innovation is the catalyst for sustainable jobs, economic and community strength, improved health and environmental benefits. Alberta Innovates leads and accelerates innovation from discovery to use across all sectors in all parts of the province. As Alberta's largest research and innovation agency, we are uniquely positioned to propel great ideas forward to improve the lives of Albertans today and for generations to come.

Alberta Innovates believes the research and innovation (R&I) ecosystem is stronger and more sustainable when it is broadly representative of the overall diversity of our community. We strive to ensure that all interested and qualified parties have an equitable opportunity to participate and contribute to the ecosystem and that our processes are inclusive.

The projects that our programs invest in are critical to how Alberta Innovates achieves positive impact for Albertans in alignment with the Government of Alberta's R&I priorities, as expressed in our corporate Business Plan. (See the most recent Business Plan on our [Publications](#) page on our website.) Accordingly, it is essential for project outcomes to align with those of the program.

The CASBE Program is managed through the Post-Secondary Investments and Emerging Technologies (PSIET) within Alberta Innovates. PSIET team provides funding, enabling and matchmaking to emerging technology inventors to increase the volume of commercial outcomes for Alberta's future prosperity. Please visit <https://albertainnovates.ca/focus-areas/post-secondary-investments/>.

Program Overview

The Campus Alberta Small Business Engagement “CASBE Program” is a funding Program within Post-Secondary Investments & Emerging Technologies at Alberta Innovates to leverage different research industry partnerships programs offered by Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC).

During 2023-24, the CASBE program will offer two different streams:

Stream I: is only for applicants from Alberta Colleges and Polytechnics ([NSERC ARD program](#)).

Stream II: is only for applicants from Alberta Universities ([NSERC Alliance](#)).

As circumstances arise, Alberta Innovates will include special calls under Stream I and Stream II within the scope of the CASBE program. For instance, **during 2023-24, Alberta Innovates will accept approved 2021 NSERC [Applied Research and Technology Partnership \(ARTP\) grants](#) pilot program applications under CASBE Stream I; and [NSERC Alliance Quantum grants](#) applications under CASBE Stream II.**

The objectives of the CASBE Program are to:

- Facilitate Alberta SMEs (the “Industry Partner”) to adopt emerging technologies in Alberta’s research and commercialization priorities to diversify their technological services and/or products (the “Project”) with the support of Post-Secondary Institutions (the “Applicant”).
- Provide the applicants funding to effectively use their technology platforms’ world-class knowledge, facilities and students within Campus Alberta to support the Alberta SMEs.

The key outcomes (i.e., measurable effects) the program will accomplish for the benefit of Albertans are:

- Increased R&D activity within and between Alberta SME and academic partner
- Increased knowledge transferred to the Alberta SME industry partner
- Enhanced skill and knowledge base in industry
- Increased experience and technical skills for HQP relevant to the Alberta SME
- Increased HQP career opportunities
- New and improved products and/or services
- Reported increase in the SME R&D investment

Funding

The CASBE Program provides support for up to \$150,000 per year for a maximum of 2 years.

The CASBE program leverages NSERC’s contribution per project up to \$150,000 per year for one year or a maximum of two years depending on the project duration funded by NSERC. Maximum length of the CASBE funds will be 2 years regardless of the original length of the project supported by NSERC. Example: If NSERC’s project is for 5 years, the CASBE match will be only for a maximum of two years. The industry partner is expected to provide cash and in-kind contributions in the NSERC application (the “Contribution”) following the NSERC Alliance program’s guidelines. If there are additional partners in the proposed NSERC Alliance application, such as large companies, providing cash, the AB SME must provide at least in-kind contribution, and if possible, cash contribution to the project in the Alberta Innovates CASBE application. The combined funds from NSERC and Alberta Innovates will provide sufficient funds

for academics to develop long term emerging technologies research projects to assist Alberta SMEs to shorten the time it takes for them to adopt and innovate further. Alberta Innovates' Investment and NSERC's funding will flow to the Applicant to cover Eligible Expenses.

Alberta Innovates only funds reasonable costs incurred after an Investment Agreement is signed by Alberta Innovates and the Applicant. Any costs incurred prior to the signing of the Investment Agreement, and costs greater than market prices, are ineligible. Costs must be incurred between -arm's length entities. Please refer to Schedule B in the Investment Agreement posted on the CASBE web page <https://albertainnovates.ca/programs/campus-alberta-small-business-engagement/> for detailed information, including eligible and ineligible expenses.

Key Dates

The Campus Alberta Small Business Engagement (CASBE) program receives applications in a continuous intake basis. Both Alberta Innovates and NSERC recommend potential applicants to first connect with the CASBE program manager to discuss the proposed project.

Eligibility

Projects that apply emerging technologies (ET) in Alberta's research and commercialization priorities as outlined in the [Alberta Technology and Innovation Strategy \(ATIS\)](#), are eligible for CASBE application.

Please visit [Alberta-Innovates-CASBE-NSERC-program-Priority-Emerging-Technology](#), to see the list of potential emerging technologies.

Applicant Eligibility

CASBE program is open to:

- Researchers from Alberta Post-secondary institutions (Alberta Colleges, Polytechnics and Universities) that meet eligibility criteria for NSERC research programs within the scope of CASBE Stream I and Stream II.

All Applicants must also:

- Be authorized to undertake the proposed project, and execute a grant agreement with Alberta Innovates on our standard terms;
- Not otherwise be prohibited from receiving Alberta Innovates funding, for instance due to a past bad debt or otherwise not be in good financial standing with Alberta Innovates or its subsidiaries, InnoTech Alberta and C-FER Technologies;
- Have a physical presence in Alberta.
- Notify Alberta Innovates and NSERC immediately in the event any changes to the status of the Industry Partner (e.g., absence or loss of the Industry Partner) takes place during the course of the project. The Applicant must meet the criteria required by NSERC and Alberta Innovates as a result of such changes, to ensure the CASBE project eligibility requirements are maintained in an acceptable manner.

Partner/Collaborator/Service Provider Eligibility

The Industry Partner(s) are required to:

- be a for-profit SME; with at least 2 Full Time Employees (FTE)
- demonstrate the relationship between the Applicant and Industry Partner(s) does not create a conflict of interest;
- have demonstrated operations in Alberta and able to continue to adopt and develop in house the results of the academic research;
- meet the following definition of an SME: a company with fewer than 500 Full Time employees, and less than \$50,000,000 annual gross revenue;
- be a legal entity:
 - incorporated in Alberta; or
 - incorporated federally or in another jurisdiction AND extra-provincially registered in Alberta; or

- a General Partnership, Limited Partnership or Limited Liability Partnership AND registered in Alberta; and
- be in good financial & final reporting standing with Alberta Innovates and its subsidiaries InnoTech Alberta and C-FER Technologies.

Project Eligibility

To qualify for funding, all Projects must:

- Align with the objectives of the CASBE program;
- Meet NSERC's eligibility criteria;
- Align with any of Alberta's research and commercialization priorities outlined in the [Alberta Technology and Innovation Strategy \(ATIS\)](#);
- Align with any of the emerging technologies priorities outlined in [Alberta-Innovates-CASBE-NSERC-program-Priority-Emerging-Technology](#);
- Multiple partners including MNEs are encouraged, however, at least one Alberta SME as Industry Partner is required to get the CASBE match;
- Be stepped with critical milestones including Mid-project and final presentations and final report;
- Be completed within the one or two-year term;
- Comply with other criteria that Alberta Innovates may develop from time to time; and
- Technology being developed by the Project must be within TRL levels 2 to 6.

How to Apply?

Alberta Innovates and NSERC recommend that the applicant applies first to Alberta Innovates 2023-24 CASBE program and then, if recommended, submit the completed AI CASBE NSERC joint application to NSERC, for funding consideration.

- a. To start the application process for CASBE grants, researchers should begin by contacting the CASBE program manager with the NSERC–CASBE proposal idea to assess initial alignment to the program requirements.
- b. If alignment has been identified, the applicant will need to submit the Post-Secondary Investments & Emerging Technologies (PSIET) Intake Form choosing CASBE within the Funding Opportunities tab on the [AI online portal](#) (also known as the SmartSimple application portal).
- c. If the PSIET Intake Form is approved, the applicant is invited to submit an AI CASBE NSERC Full proposal.

The applicant completes the AI CASBE application using SmartSimple. As part of the AI CASBE SmartSimple application, the Applicant must attach a draft PDF version of the corresponding NSERC application form using the NSERC online portal. Applicants are advised to read instructions available in the NSERC website for the CASBE program ([NSERC ARD](#) or [NSERC Alliance](#), or [Alliance Quantum grants](#)), as applicable.

- d. Ensure all elements in the application form are completed.

a. Stream I:

- **NSERC ARD:** Complete the NSERC ARD application (draft)
 - If conditionally approved, Alberta Innovates will provide an email to the applicant indicating note of conditional approval (for **NSERC ARD**), which the applicant needs to include with their NSERC application under Other Documents
 - Then the applicants can proceed with applying to NSERC through the appropriate NSERC application portal (NSERC Convergence portal).

b. Stream II:

- **NSERC Alliance:** Applicants complete the NSERC Alliance application (draft)
 - Note that the applicant for general **NSERC Alliance**, must ensure that they,
 - a. For the *Type of call* field, select *Alberta Innovates - CASBE* from the drop-down menu, and
 - b. In the *Contributions* section of the *form 101*, add Alberta Innovates as *Joint call funding partner*
 - If conditionally approved, Alberta Innovates will sign the NSERC 'joint call funding partner' form in the NSERC application portal (for NSERC Alliance)
 - Then the applicants can proceed with applying to NSERC through the appropriate NSERC application portal (NSERC online system).

- **NSERC Alliance Quantum:** Applicants complete the NSERC Alliance application (draft) and are advised to read the instructions available in the [funding opportunity's web page](#).
 - Applicants must ensure in [NSERC's online system](#) that they,
 - a. For the *Type of call* field, select *Quantum - Strengthening Capacity* from the drop-down menu, and
 - b. In the *Contributions* section of the *form 101*, add Alberta Innovates as *Other funder (not involved in the research)*
 - If conditionally approved, Alberta Innovates will provide an email to the applicant indicating note of conditional approval (for NSERC Alliance Quantum grants) which the applicant needs to include with their NSERC application under Other Documents
 - Then the applicants can proceed with applying to NSERC through the appropriate NSERC application portal (NSERC online system).

Applicants with approved NSERC research partnership grant:

This category is applicable for applicants who are interested in the CASBE program and meet the program eligibility criteria, including one of the following:

a. Stream I:

- Approved NSERC ARD grant in the last 12 months, or
- Approved 2021 NSERC ARTP grant, or

b. Stream II:

- Approved NSERC Alliance grant in the last 12 months

The following application process steps are involved:

- i. Researchers should begin by contacting the CASBE program manager with the NSERC approved project description and potential additional R&D activities intended to be covered by Alberta Innovates CASBE program to assess alignment to the program requirements.
- ii. If alignment has been identified, the applicant will then need to submit the Post-Secondary Investments & Emerging Technologies (PSIET) Intake Form by choosing CASBE within the Funding Opportunities tab on the [AI online portal](#).
- iii. If the PSIET Intake Form is approved, the applicant is invited to submit a CASBE Full proposal.
- iv. The applicant completes the AI CASBE application using SmartSimple. The applicant ensures the following are included in the application: the original approved NSERC project, reviewers' comments, NSERC Notice of Decision (NOD) and Terms & Conditions. A Gantt chart including CASBE and NSERC R&D activities, description (~2-3 pages) of the additional CASBE R&D activities, and associated budget, are also required as attachments in the [AI online portal](#).

By submitting their CASBE application to Alberta Innovates and the related NSERC application to NSERC, applicants, co-applicants and partner organizations agree to the sharing between Alberta Innovates and NSERC of any and all information, including personal information, in any way related to the applications, their adjudication and to the awards.

Evaluation Process

Alberta Innovates evaluation

Applicants applying first to Alberta Innovates CASBE program and then submitting to NSERC:

All applications are first reviewed and evaluated by Alberta Innovates to determine if fit with the CASBE Program objectives and intended outcomes.

Alberta Innovates evaluates submitted applications to the CASBE Program based on the

- Eligibility criteria for the Applicant, the Industry Partner, and the proposed project, as stated in the guideline,
- Merit indicators followed by NSERC. The applicants are advised to check the criteria on the NSERC website for the specific program they are applying to for funding.
 - o For example, [Alliance grants merit indicators](#) are i) Relevance and outcomes, ii) Partnership, iii) Quality of the proposal, and iv) Training.

All applicants are strongly recommended to demonstrate adequately the practice of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in their project plan.

Alberta Innovates retains the sole right to determine the evaluation process and assessment criteria and does not disclose the names of its reviewers to ensure their objectivity and impartiality. Internal and external parties involved in the evaluation are subject to confidentiality and conflict-of-interest policies set by Alberta Innovates.

Once the applicants receive conditional approval by Alberta Innovates, then NSERC will review and evaluate the AI CASBE NSERC applications using its review process.

Applicants with approved NSERC research partnership grants:

Alberta Innovates will review and evaluate the CASBE applications using the same evaluation criteria as presented in the section above. NSERC reviewers' comments forms must be attached with the CASBE application submitted in SmartSimple, and will complement Alberta Innovates review.

Decision

Applications that are approved by both NSERC and Alberta Innovates will receive the Alberta Innovates funding. NSERC and Alberta Innovates will execute separate agreements with the Applicant.

Performance Measurement

Alberta Innovates invests in research and innovation activities on behalf of Albertans to help build a healthier, more sustainable and prosperous future for the province.

To maximize the impact of these investments, our funding is tied to achievement of results and outcomes. For this reason, Alberta Innovates funds on a milestone completion basis. This means the Applicant must submit a Progress or Final Report and demonstrate sufficient progress before Alberta Innovates advances the next milestone payment.

The Investment Agreement outlines the responsibilities the Applicant has in reporting Project outcomes to Alberta Innovates over the course of the Project and following completion of the Project. Outcomes of the Project may be monitored for up to five years after Project completion, so Alberta Innovates can evaluate the economic, social, health and/or environmental benefits to Alberta resulting from our investments.

Alberta Innovates has a common set of performance metrics it monitors, both at the individual Project level and for the aggregate Program. These metrics may evolve over time.

Terms and Conditions

Once we have evaluated and approved an application for funding, Alberta Innovates will require the Applicant to sign our standard-form Investment Agreement. A copy of the Investment Agreement is available on the Alberta Innovates website ([CASBE grant agreement template](#)) for your reference.

The Investment Agreement sets out in detail the roles, responsibilities and obligations of the various Parties to ensure a successful Project. Alberta Innovate will not provide any funding until the Investment Agreement has been signed by all Parties.

Alberta Innovates will only fund Applicants who have satisfied all eligibility criteria. Meeting the eligibility criteria does not guarantee access to funding, and all funding decisions will be made by Alberta Innovates at its sole discretion.

Alberta Innovates will only correspond in writing and provide copies of the Application to the person named in the Application form as the one authorized to speak for the Applicant.

Should you have any questions about this guide or what is expected, please contact Alberta Innovates (see contact information below). Please note that Alberta Innovates may modify this guide from time to time in keeping with any changes to the program.

Contact Information

CASBE PROGRAM (STREAM I AND II)

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NSERC STREAM I

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NSERC Alliance grants (STREAM II)

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NSERC Alliance Quantum grants (STREAM II)

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