UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Energy Transition Seed Grant Program with Indian Research Partners

Program Guidelines

Introduction

India is an emerging powerhouse in the global economy, especially in higher education and knowledge-based industries. Over the past decade, the University of Alberta (U of A) has developed partnerships with many of the top-ranked institutions in India including, among others, the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Madras, and Roorkee and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc).

In January 2023, President Flanagan led a [mission to India](#) to connect with our partners and strengthen the U of A's position as a global leader in energy and climate change research and innovation in the minds of key post-secondary institutions as well as government ministries, funders, think tanks, multinational companies and industry associations. Many of our Indian partners are eager to deepen their collaborations with the U of A in the fields of energy, environment and climate change.

Purpose and Theme

The purpose of this competitive seed grant program is to encourage and catalyze international research collaborations between the U of A and key partners in India in new and innovative directions that lead to larger-scale and longer-term partnerships funded by external sources.

The theme of the seed grant program is **Energy Transitions**. The topics under this theme include, but are not limited to, renewable energy (e.g., solar, wind, biomass), hydrogen, CCUS, energy grids and storage, and technical strategies to arrive at net-zero emissions.

General Parameters

- The U of A will commit CAD $200,000 in funding per year for each of three years for the seed grant program (Total: $600,000 over three years).
- Each year, the $200,000 will fund eight (8) research projects at $25,000 per project.

- Two key Indian institutions will be selected each year as the eligible partners. Ideally, four (4) projects per eligible partner per year will be funded.
- Proposals may request up to a maximum of $25,000, which can be used over a period of up to two years.
- As a U of A internal seed funding program, the intent is that the funds will stay at the U of A for use by U of A faculty members to support collaboration with Indian research partners.
- Matching funding from the Indian partner is not a requirement but is encouraged.
- Funds may be used to support activities such as: exploratory research activities and initiatives, workshops and meetings, mobility of staff, students and postdoctoral trainees for the purposes of building the research collaboration, and salaries/stipends of graduate students, postdoctoral trainees, and research personnel such as laboratory technicians.
- Proposals must describe the plan to develop a joint research project or program with the eligible Indian partner using the format of the [NSERC Alliance International Catalyst Grant](#) program or other similar [NSERC Alliance programs](#) and with a focus on energy transitions.
- The sustainability of the partnership is an essential outcome for the program. A requirement for receiving a seed grant award is that the Principal Investigator (PI) also submit an application to an NSERC Alliance International program (Catalyst or Collaboration grant).
- Applicants are encouraged to include early career researchers, opportunities for personnel training (e.g., students, postdoctoral researchers), and advance the principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.
- The PI will be required to report on project outcomes.

Eligibility

- Each proposal must include a PI from the U of A and a collaborator from an eligible Indian institution.
- The U of A PI and Indian collaborator must be current tenure-track academic staff (faculty members), or equivalent.
- In addition to the U of A PI and Indian collaborator, applications may include other faculty members or postdoctoral researchers from the U of A or Indian partner as co-applicant team members.
- If appropriate, applications may include team members from other institutions or industry partners, outside of the U of A and named eligible Indian partner institutions but funds will stay at the U of A for use by U of A faculty members.
- A U of A faculty member can serve as a PI on no more than one application per application cycle. There is no limit to the number of applications a faculty member can participate on as a team member.

Application Process and Timelines

Calls for proposals will be initiated by the U of A Office of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation (VPRI) and applications will be submitted to the Office of the VPRI.

A complete application will include (<u>as four separate documents</u>):
1. Research collaboration proposal. Proposals for the Seed Grant Program will use the [NSERC Alliance International Catalyst Grant](#) template. (An example of a successful 2023 U of A NSERC Alliance International Catalyst Grant proposal can be found **[here](#)**).
2. Budget and budget justification. [Template for the budget and budget justification](#). **Download template prior to completing**. See below for information on eligible expenses.
3. Canadian Common Curriculum Vitae (CCV) for the U of A PI in the NSERC Alliance Grant Format. Please visit the CCV portal **[here](#)**.
4. Short-version CV for the Indian collaborator (Maximum two (2) pages following the format for collaborators' biographical sketch indicated in the NSERC Alliance International Catalyst Grant [instructions](#)).

Timeline*	
March 27, 2024	Application process opens
May 17, 2024	Application deadline (Submission to Office of the VPRI)
June 14, 2024	Applicants notified of the outcome of their applications
July 1, 2024	Project start date
June 30, 2026	Project end date
August 31, 2026	Deadline for project final report

Suggested timeline; Will be modified as needed. Requests for interim reporting may be made to meet government reporting requirements.

Selection Process

A committee of three (3) or four (4) U of A senior administrators / faculty members will review the proposals. External expert reviews may be requested if required. Where possible, U of A will seek to engage Indian partners in the selection process. The selection criteria will follow the requirements of the NSERC Alliance International Catalyst grant program.

Selection Criteria:
1) *Objectives / Scientific merit* – The project falls within the scope of priority areas for the U of A and the eligible Indian partner institution. The proposed research is novel and innovative and of high academic quality. The anticipated outcomes of the potential longer-

term research collaboration are high impact and likely to be of interest to major national or international funding agencies.

2) *Project Plan* – The proposal describes a reasonable plan of activities for the timeframe, which will enable the collaborators to build towards a sustainable research partnership. Using the NSERC Alliance International Catalyst grant template, the requirement of developing a "sustainable research partnership" can be addressed in response to questions on relevance and expected outcomes, scope and nature of the future collaboration, and the training plan. Further, if there is an existing project or potential for applying for funding in India supported by the Indian Federal Government, this could be mentioned when describing the expertise and experience of the Indian research partner, and what they may do to support the collaboration.

3) *Team* – The team includes the expertise required for successful completion of the project. The advantage created by the complementary expertise between U of A and the Indian partner has been explained. As appropriate, the team structure includes early career researchers, opportunities for post-doctoral and/or graduate training and application of the principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

Eligible expenses

Funds may be used to support activities such as: exploratory research activities and initiatives, workshops and meetings, mobility of staff, students and postdoctoral trainees for the purposes of building the research collaboration, and salaries/stipends of graduate students, postdoctoral trainees, and research personnel such as laboratory technicians.

Funding cannot be used for management fees or overhead, salaries or salary supplementation of faculty or administrative staff, purchase of capital assets, equipment depreciation, or scholarships.

U of A Grant Administration

Prior to submission of the application to the Office of the VPRI, the U of A PI should do the following:

- Create a "Request for New Application / Proposal / Project" using the Researcher Home Page. For instructions, please consult the "Quick Reference Guide - Request for New Application / Proposal / Project" found on the Research Administrative Services (RAS) website.
- In the "Request for New Application / Proposal / Project" platform, please indicate the Source of Funds / Sponsor as "Internal". The program name is "Indian Seed Grant".
- Proposals must be received by RAS at least 5 business days in advance of the submission deadline. Contact rsoinfo@ualberta.ca for questions about RAS pre-submission processes.

Once an application has been approved, an award letter for the U of A seed funding will be sent to the U of A PI from the Office of the VPRI. A condition of the award is that the PI submit an application to the NSERC Alliance International Catalyst program prior to receiving the U of A internal seed grant funding. The PI should forward to the Office of the VPRI the confirmation / acknowledgement email that they receive from NSERC when they submit the NSERC Alliance International Catalyst application. In some cases, applicants may choose to apply for the NSERC Alliance International Collaboration grant instead of the Catalyst grant. A confirmation / acknowledgement email for the Collaboration grant will also be accepted. Once confirmation is received that the NSERC application has been submitted, the U of A seed funding will be released. The PI will contact Research Administrative Services to access and manage the funds according to the approved budget and U of A policies and procedures.

Seed grants are awarded for a maximum two-year period. Extensions are not automatic and will be subject to the approval by the Office of the VPRI.

Reporting

The PIs will be required to provide a final report to the Office of the VPRI within two months of the project end date. The major criteria for judging the success of the partnership will be the project outcomes (relative to the project plan) and future direction of the research, including attraction of major external funding awards. Requests for interim reporting may be made to meet government reporting requirements.

Third Parties

Where projects involve collaborators from other institutions, there should be appropriate agreements in place, depending on the projects and nature of collaboration (i.e., confidentiality, IP), to ensure that projects are completed in accordance with the expectations of the seed grant program.