

Seed Grant Program - Guidelines

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) University of Alberta (UA)

Purpose

The Parties recognize the collaborative opportunities that exist between them and wish to further the partnership through joint research in energy transition, particularly in power, management, energy storage, carbon capture utilization (with an emphasis on catalyst development), hydrogen fuel cell, e-cracking and resilience grid.

The intent of this competitive Seed Grant Program is to encourage and catalyze international collaborations between the Parties in new and innovative research directions that lead to larger-scale and longer-term partnerships funded by external sources.

General Parameters

- A maximum of 4 projects will be funded in each year of the Seed Grant Program with each proposal funded for a maximum of CAN \$25,000 from University of Alberta and a maximum of SGD \$25,000 from Nanyang Technological U.
- The Seed Grant Program will run for two years (2025 and 2026) and then reviewed by the Parties.
- Unallocated funds for a particular year will not be carried forward to future years. For avoidance of doubt, a particular year shall be counted for a period of 12 months from the start of the Program Term and continues for a same period thereafter each year.
- Both Parties will agree on the topic(s) of mutual interest for each year of the Seed Grant Program.
- Funds from each Party allocated to successful proposals will stay with the Party funding the proposal for use by the Party's own faculty members. For avoidance of doubt, there is no transfer of funds between Parties.
- Proposals must describe their plan to develop a Joint Research Project or the Program. Successful proposals must include a description of the project's objectives, intended outcomes, and how the research will be sustained beyond the life of the Seed Grant Program.
- The Co-Principal Investigators from the Parties will be required to report on project outcomes.
- Seed Grant Program funding may be used to support activities such as: exploratory research initiatives, planning workshops and meetings, and mobility of staff, students and post-doctoral trainees (for more information see 'Eligible Expenses' below).
- Applicants of the proposal are encouraged to include early career researchers, opportunities for graduate training and advance the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Eligibility

- Each proposal must include one Co-Principal Investigator from University of Alberta and one Co-Principal Investigator from Nanyang Technological University.

- Co-Principal Investigators must be current tenure-track academic staff (full-time tenure track faculty members) at University of Alberta and Nanyang Technological University respectively.
- In addition to the two Co-PIs, applications may include other University of Alberta or Nanyang Technological University faculty members or post-doctoral researchers as team members.
- If appropriate, applications may include team members from other institutions or industry partners.
- A faculty member can serve as a Co-PI on no more than one application per application cycle. There is no limit to the number of applications a faculty member can participate as a team member.

Application Process and Timelines

A call for proposals will be initiated by both Parties annually for joint research proposals. A complete proposal will include:

- A completed application form including budget and budget justification.
- A short-version (maximum **3 page**) Curriculum Vitae from each of the Parties' Co-Principal Investigators.

Proposals must be sent electronically (**as one pdf**) to each Party's application channels listed below and must be submitted complete.

University of Alberta - Dr. Laura Patterson-Fortin (laurap@ualberta.ca), Grant Writer, Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation).

Nanyang Technological University - *RISE*

*Timeline**

10 April 2025	Application process opens
21 May 2025	Application deadline
1 July 2025	Applicants notified of the outcome of their applications
1 August 2025	Project start date
1 February 2027	Project end date (18-months from project start date).
1 April 2027	Deadline for project final report (2-months from project end date)

**Suggested timeline; can be modified as needed by mutual agreement between the institutions.*

Selection Process

1. Initial Screening:
 - a. On receipt of Proposals, Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation) (University of Alberta) and OIE (Nanyang Technological University) will conduct an initial screening to ensure all applications meet the basic eligibility criteria and submission requirements.
2. Internal Evaluation:

Each Party will appoint internal reviewers to review the proposals using the selection criteria set out below:

 - a. University of Alberta Reviewers to be appointed by VPRI.

- b. Nanyang Technological University Reviewers will be appointed by Vice President Research (VPR) nominee.
- c. Scoring and Ranking:
 - i. At University of Alberta, each proposal is reviewed by three UA Reviewers, who will provide scores and constructive comments within four weeks via the online review form
 - ii. At Nanyang Technological University, each proposal is reviewed by three NTU Reviewers, who will provide scores and constructive comments within four weeks via the online review form
3. Exchange Reviewers' Ranking and Scores:
 - a. The Parties will exchange the reviewers' ranking and scores on an agreed date. Nanyang Technological University will collate the data and clearly mark the recommendations for the Joint Panel before the Panel meets.
4. Joint Panel Meeting:
 - a. The Joint Panel meets online to discuss the top-ranked proposals. The Joint Panel comprises senior administrators / faculty members who will be put in place by the Parties, with three members representing each Party. Panel members provide additional insights and may adjust scores based on the discussion.
5. Final Selection:
 - a. The proposals to be funded will be based on the Joint Panel's recommendations.
6. Notification and Feedback:
 - a. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their proposals. If requested, each Party is encouraged to provide constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants to help them improve future submissions.

Selection Criteria:

1. Technical Merit: i.e. the importance/novelty of the project within its field or in terms of the challenges it seeks to address.
2. Strategic merit/alignment: The selection committee will be guided by the following considerations:
 - How the project advances the interests of both Parties
 - The proposal describes a reasonable plan of activities for the timeframe, which will enable the co-PIs to build towards a sustainable partnership
 - A clear case of complementarity/synergy between the proposed applicants (the whole project outcomes being greater than the sum of its parts);
 - Funding potential (the ability to produce a convincing roadmap for future funding);
 - Potential for the project to include relevant third parties (e.g. commercial, governmental and non-governmental organizations) for greater impact.
3. Joint capacity: the standing and track record of the academics involved, and the evidence of their shared commitment to achieve the aims of the project. As appropriate, the team structure includes early career researchers, opportunities for post-doctoral or graduate training and application of the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Eligible expenses UofA [these are the rules that apply to the funds that the UofA provides to the UofA-side researchers]

- The funding is intended to catalyze research collaborations and build towards larger external funding opportunities that will sustain the partnership between the co-PIs.

- Funds may be used to support activities such as: exploratory research initiatives, planning workshops and meetings, mobility of staff, students and post-doctoral trainees, and salaries/stipends of graduate students, post-doctoral trainees, and research personnel such as laboratory technicians.
- Funding cannot be used for management fees, course or bench fees, or overhead, salaries or salary supplementation of faculty or administrative staff, purchase of equipment and capital assets, equipment depreciation, or scholarships.

Eligible expenses – NTU [these are the rules that apply to the funds that NTU provides to the NTU-side researchers]

- The funding is intended to catalyze research collaborations and build towards larger external funding opportunities that will sustain the partnership between the co-PIs.
- Funds may be used to support activities such as: exploratory research initiatives, planning workshops and meetings, mobility of staff, students and post-doctoral trainees, and adhoc payments to undergraduate and postgraduate students assistants. .
- Funding cannot be used for management fees, course or bench fees, or overhead, salaries, stipends or salary supplementation, whether for faculty, researchers, students or administrative staff, purchase of equipment and capital assets, equipment depreciation, or scholarships

Grant Administration

- Seed Grant Program funding is awarded for a maximum 18-month period. Extensions are not automatic and will be subject to the approval of both Parties. Extensions are limited to a period of 3-months only.
- Proposals may request up to a maximum of up to CAD \$25,000 to be provided by UA and SGD \$25,000 to be provided by NTU.
- Funds from each institution allocated to successful proposals will stay with the funding institution for use by the institution's own faculty members; that is, there is no transfer of funds between institutions.
- Once an application has been approved, an award letter will be sent by each institution to the institution's respective Co-PI. Each Co-PI will then work with their institution's research office to access and manage the funds according to the approved budget as well as the policies and procedures of their institution.

Reporting

- The Co-PIs will be required to provide a final report to the offices of the Vice-Presidents Research and Innovation of UA and the Office of International Engagement at NTU Parties 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.
- In addition to the abovementioned final report, the successful applicants are required to submit a progress report for an additional three (3) years following project completion.
- The OVPRI (University of Alberta) and OIE (Nanyang Technological University) will provide the Report Form to the award holders towards the end of their projects and periodically after that. The progress reports should be completed and returned by email prior to the established deadlines.

Intellectual Property

Researchers participating in the Seed Fund will be bound by the intellectual property terms as set out in the Agreement. Broadly the IP terms are as follows:

Intellectual Property owned by UA or NTU before the effective date of the Seed Grant Program will continue to be the property of each Institution. Such intellectual property will be introduced into the Seed Grant Program only where specifically identified and with prior written agreement between the UA and NTU.

Intellectual Property both intangible and tangible conceived or developed through the Seed Grant Program by Co-PIs will be owned by the respective institution.

In the event that intellectual property is jointly developed by Co-PIs, UA and NTU shall jointly decide and agree who is best placed to protect and maintain such Jointly Discovered Research Results and if appropriate enter into a separate agreement to manage the said Jointly Discovered Research Result.

For the avoidance of doubt, in the event of any conflict between the intellectual property terms in this Guidelines and the Agreement, the intellectual property terms set out in the Agreement shall prevail.

Third Parties

Where projects involve collaborators from other institutions, the Parties are expected to put 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.