

Alberta Science and Research Fund

Guide to Applicants



Introduction

Alberta is fortunate to have a rich legacy of a natural wealth and visionary people who led the province to invest in science and research directed toward development of these resources. However, sustainable high quality employment cannot be assured solely through a traditional resource-based economy. In the 21st century, knowledge will be the most important renewable resource. Investments in science and research and development will build our knowledge resource and increase our innovation capacity.

Through the initiatives of the Alberta Science and Research Authority and other government, academic and industry interests, Alberta is investing for its future. One such initiative is the Science and Research Fund under the Science and Research Authority.

Alberta Science and Research Authority

In 1994, the Government of Alberta established the Alberta Science and Research Authority (ASRA) to maximize the effectiveness of science and research as an integral component to the success of the province in the global economy. ASRA consists of a Board of Management representing a cross section of the research and development (R&D), academic and business communities in the province and a secretariat. ASRA reports to the Honourable Dr. Lorne Taylor, the Minister of Innovation and Science. ASRA works collaboratively with government departments and agencies and other stakeholders to undertake its mandate.

The Science and Research Fund

The Fund supports important strategic and research initiatives that will produce human, social, environmental, or economic benefits for Albertans. Funding may be provided to the following classes of projects or purposes related to science and research:

- science and research infrastructure development to ensure quality infrastructure of people, facilities, and equipment necessary to support excellence in basic science required in new, leading-edge fields with future potential for Alberta;
- building and strengthening R&D partnerships, in both the funding and performing of R&D, involving the provincial government, other levels of government, business and industry, and the universities;
- enhancing Alberta's capability to transmit and transfer knowledge and technology from R&D to application and commercialization;
- increasing the leverage of targeted provincial R&D investments in areas identified as strategically important;
- enhancing the receptor capability of Alberta firms to acquire and use technology developed through R&D; and
- enhancing the human resource base necessary for a growing and prosperous Alberta.

Science and Research Fund Principles

The Science and Research Fund operates under the following general principles:

Strategic Initiatives

The Fund supports strategic science and research initiatives that produce human, social, environmental, or economic benefits for Albertans.

Timely Action

The review process is designed to focus on priority evaluation criteria, draw upon diverse expertise, and deliver decisions within a review period of 90 days after a submission deadline.

Focus

Priority is given to initiatives which exhibit scientific and research excellence, are to be undertaken in Alberta, and focus on:

- building R&D infrastructure;
- building R&D partnerships;
- bridging R&D to businesses;
- building technological capability;
- building human capital;
- leveraging additional funds from other sources; or
- recognized priority areas.

Open Opportunity

Unsolicited proposals for funding support are welcomed. ASRA also encourages the development of proposals in strategically targeted areas. All proposals are considered within prescribed evaluation criteria.

Commercialization

Initiatives aimed at capturing direct commercial benefits are eligible provided they:

- are not undertaken by a single commercial enterprise;
- involve collaboration, consortia or partnerships; or
- provide an opportunity for a financial return to the Fund.

Strategic Science and Research Areas

The Alberta Science and Research Authority will contribute to strategically targeted research application areas to lead Alberta into the 21st century. To assist ASRA in identifying targeted research areas, in 1996, a public consultation process was conducted to identify what Albertans considered these research application areas to be. The results are shown on the accompanying table. The research application areas fall into two categories labeled as strong and selective focus. Proponents for projects are advised to discuss their interests and fit of their project to the research areas with the Secretariat staff before submitting a proposal.

Research Application Areas for Strong Focus	Research Application Areas for Selective Focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agriculture and Agrifood• Biotechnology• Education• Energy Production• Energy Products• Environment• Forestry and Forest Products• Health and Medicine• Information and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arts and Culture• Construction• Human and Community Development• Manufacturing• Mineral Production• Tourism• Transportation

ASRA has published various documents that relate to ASRA's strategic objectives.

The following four reports are available on the ASRA website at www.gov.ab.ca/sra:

- Commercialization of Biotechnology in Alberta – 1995
- ASRA R&D Priority Setting Consultations – 1997
- Sustaining the Alberta Advantage – 1997
- Information and Communications Technology – A Strategy for Alberta – 1998

The following draft report is available only in hardcopy:

- A Health Research Strategy for Alberta (Draft) - 1998

Proposal Review Criteria

Proposals are considered on the basis of the following criteria:

Excellence of the Proposal and Proponents:

- A need for the initiative is identified and appropriate.
- The human, social, environmental, economic, scientific or ancillary benefits are identified and appropriate.
- The proposal is comprehensive and includes supporting information for assessment.
- The budget and schedule are appropriate.
- Assessment by peers, industry, government and potential sponsors is supportive.
- The proponents are credible, experienced, and capable of managing the initiative.

Partnerships and Networking:

- The initiative creates partnerships, consortia, or collaboration involving universities, government and private sector participants.
- The initiative creates, renews or expands existing infrastructure or improves capability in a sector.
- The initiative creates new expertise or capability in an area of strategic importance to Alberta.
- The initiative improves the ability of industry to commercialize R&D.

Human Capital Development:

- The initiative adds to the number or develops the capability of people engaged in an area of strategic importance to Alberta.
- The initiative contributes to the attraction or retention of highly skilled personnel.

Financial Leverage:

- The initiative uses support from the Science and Research Fund to leverage financial support from other sources.

Opportunity for Success:

- The initiative targets a science and research area of strategic importance to Alberta.
- Timing of the initiative and length of time required for S&R Fund support are appropriate; the initiative is not dependent on ongoing S&R Fund support.
- Mechanisms to enable success in the conduct of the initiative and of outcomes are identified.
- Indicators and impacts of success, potential risks, and critical success factors are identified.

Advice to Applicants

Based on the ASRA Board's experience with the Fund operation during its first two years, applicants should consider the following advice in developing a proposal.

- Applications for “infrastructure” are acceptable. “Building infrastructure” projects can include special equipment for a facility, communication networks in a building, and those items necessary to conduct the scientific and research activities to be undertaken. “Organizational infrastructure” projects can include initiatives that create new or strengthen existing operations, such as creating a new research centre, establishing a new professional association, or expanding an existing program. Applications for building structures (“bricks and mortar”) are not acceptable.
- Grants may be provided for capital and operational activities of programs for up to five years. However, the ASRA contribution should be decreasing during that time. The applicant has to demonstrate how the program will be sustainable over the longer term.
- Applications for science education initiatives, and science awareness and promotion in reaching the general population are acceptable.
- Indirect costs (“overhead”) for a project are eligible, provided they are directly related to the project activities, and are considered reasonable by the Board.
- Leveraging of funds from various sources is appropriate for projects supported by the Science and Research Fund. The Board will take the total of provincial government funding into consideration (e.g., ASRA, IIPP, AHFMR, or government departments) in reviewing sources of funds. Applicants are encouraged to obtain a significant portion of funds from non-provincial government sources, thereby increasing the leverage of provincial funds.
- Commercial organizations applying for funding must demonstrate that a true partnership exists in the project. Appropriate partnerships include the involvement of university or other research establishment scientists, other companies, etc. A partnership is not considered to exist if one commercial applicant is contracting with and paying all other participants. Commercial applicants should provide evidence that the technology and jobs will remain in Alberta for the benefit of Albertans.
- The Science and Research Fund does not provide funds for endowments for research projects, education, or other scientific activities.
- The Science and Research Fund as a matter of course does not provide support for projects undertaken outside Alberta's borders, in particular where equipment would be installed outside the province. The applicability of this guideline will depend on the strategic importance of the initiative to be supported.
- Research conferences or other scientific conferences are not considered to be a priority for support.

- Researchers at universities and other research organizations should ensure the organization's procedures for submitting research proposals are followed and that the appropriate signatures are obtained. ASRA asks the organization to provide comments and a ranking of those submissions, and to confirm that it will be committed to supporting those proposals accepted for funding.

Obtaining and Submitting Applications

- Applications are to be prepared using the standard application form.
- Application forms can be downloaded from the ASRA web site at: www.gov.ab.ca/sra/fund/fund1.htm.
- Applications should be submitted at the ASRA website at: www.gov.ab.ca/sra/fund/fund1.htm. Once at the site follow the simple on screen instructions to complete the submission of the form and all supporting documents.
- In addition to the application form, an applicant may submit supplementary documents, as noted on the form. Additional information may be requested during the review process.
- The next deadline for submissions is Friday, September 10, 1999.
- The review process will take about three months, following the deadline.
- Applicants who are unable to download and submit the application form electronically should contact the fund coordinator at the numbers below.

Documents that cannot be submitted electronically should be sent to:

**Science and Research Fund, Alberta Science and Research Authority, 9th Floor,
9940 – 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2P6. Fax: (780) 427-0979.**

General Inquiries: Phone: (780) 422-1062, fax: (780) 427-0979, e-mail: srfund@gov.ab.ca. (Do not email applications to this email address. All electronic applications are to be submitted at the ASRA web site as outlined above.)