ALBERTA INNOVATES

CAMPUS **A**LBERTA **S**MALL **B**USINESS **E**NGAGEMENT

CASBE PROGRAM

2026/27 PROGRAM GUIDE

ABOUT ALBERTA INNOVATES

Alberta Innovates supports the development and commercialization of high-impact innovations that drive Alberta's future economic development and social growth. 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 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 accessible.

The projects that our programs invest in are critical to how Alberta Innovates achieves positive impact for Albertans in alignment with ATIS 2.0, as expressed through our corporate Business Plan. (See the most recent Business Plan on our Publications page on our website.) Please visit Funding Programs – Alberta Innovates for more information.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

As the Advance Program enables researchers to develop a promising idea into a technology with market potential, **the CASBE Program** is a next step on that commercialization pathway: the point where a researcher partners with an Alberta small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) to see that applied research in the market — adopted, adapted, and built into products and services Albertans can use.

Projects don't need to come through Advance to be eligible for CASBE — but for researchers who did, CASBE is a natural continuation: the same technology, now moving from a validated concept toward industry adoption, with an Alberta company as a partner.

The Campus Alberta Small Business Engagement (CASBE) Program funds collaborative research between Alberta post-secondary researchers and Alberta SMEs, helping those SMEs adopt emerging technologies to diversify and strengthen their products or processes — and giving researchers a direct route to see their research applied in the market (TRL 2 to TRL 6).

In addition, funds provided connect researchers with commercialization support- knowledge, people and processes- to increase innovation readiness level and further explore pathways to market.

Alberta Innovates may also open special calls within the scope of the CASBE Program — for example, calls tied to a specific opportunity such as NSERC Alliance Quantum grants. Special calls will be communicated separately when active.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the CASBE Program are to:

- Facilitate Alberta small- and medium-sized enterprises (Alberta SMEs, the "Industry Partner") to adopt emerging technologies in Alberta Innovates Innovation Priority Areas, diversifying their technology base and improving their competitiveness
- Provide applicants funding to effectively deploy their technology platforms' world-class knowledge, facilities, and students within Campus Alberta to support Alberta SMEs

PROGRAM KEY OUTCOMES

The key outcomes the program will accomplish for the benefit of Albertans are:

- Increased R&D activity within and between the Alberta SME and academic partner

- Increased knowledge transferred to the Alberta SME Industry Partner
- Enhanced skill and knowledge base in industry
- Build a pipeline of highly qualified talent with the technical, entrepreneurial, and business capabilities relevant to Alberta SMEs
- Increase researcher & HQP engagement with innovation and commercialization pathways, while expanding awareness of non-academic career opportunities in Alberta
- New and improved products and/or services
- Reported increase in SME R&D investment

In alignment with Alberta Innovates Innovation Priority Areas and Alberta's Technology and Innovation Strategy 2.0, and in partnership with NSERC, the program invests in projects that develop and use emerging technologies with the potential to generate economic and social growth for Albertans.

ALBERTA INNOVATES INNOVATION PRIORITY AREAS

All CASBE projects must align with at least one of Alberta Innovates' Innovation Priority Areas:

- Applied Digital and Emerging Technologies
- Health, Agricultural, and Life Science Innovation
- Advanced Materials, Defence and Aerospace
- Natural Resource Recovery

See Appendix A for a full description of each priority area.

FUNDING

Technology being developed by the Project must be within TRL levels 2 to 6 — a wider range than Advance, reflecting CASBE's role on the same pathway, where an Alberta SME is already involved in adopting and adapting the technology.

The CASBE Program offers two funding streams:

- **NSERC-Matched:** A cost-matched funding stream in partnership with NSERC through NSERC's Alliance program for university researchers, or the Applied Research and Development (ARD) program for college and polytechnic researchers. Alberta Innovates

provides up to $150,000 per year, matching NSERC funding, up to a maximum $300,000 on a two-year project.

- **Alberta Innovates Direct:** For projects and researchers at Alberta's publicly-funded post-secondaries that are well aligned with CASBE program objectives but do not have an NSERC-matched route available, Alberta Innovates provides up to $150,000 per year for a maximum two-year project.

New: all new CASBE awards granted after November 1, 2026, will include an additional $10,000 in commercialization pathway support. The primary research & development award amount maximum remains the same ($300,000); going forward *an additional* $10,000 for each CASBE project will be provided to the institution's innovation unit to fund wrap-around commercialization support for the project and research team — for example, adoption planning, IP strategy, and support carrying results from the lab into the SME's operation.

CASBE Funding parameters by stream.

Funding Item	NSERC-Matched Stream	Alberta Innovates Direct Stream
Maximum request to Alberta Innovates CASBE (Alberta Innovates contribution)	Up to $150,000 per year, to a maximum of $300,000 over two years	Up to $150,000 per year, to a maximum of $300,000 over two years
Project duration	Up to two years	Up to two years
Alberta Innovates Commercialization Pathway Support (new)	$10,000 per award, fixed — in addition to the research funding above. Paid to the Applicant's institution innovation unit to fund wrap-around commercialization support for the research team and their Alberta SME partner.	$10,000 per award, fixed — in addition to the research funding above. Paid to the Applicant's institution innovation unit to fund wrap-around commercialization support for the research team and their Alberta SME partner.
Additional NSERC- Match contribution	NSERC funds its own portion of the project under its standard ARD or Alliance program terms; Alberta	Not applicable — no NSERC match under this stream

	Innovates matches that contribution dollar-for-dollar, up to $150,000 per year	
Applicant Contribution	Applicant (Alberta Post Secondary) Cash contribution is not required under this program	Applicant (Alberta Post Secondary) Cash contribution is not required under this program

The funding assists academics working in collaboration with Alberta SMEs to carry out longer-term emerging technology research projects and may also support shorter-term projects where appropriate.

Technology being developed by the Project must be within TRL levels 2 to 6 — a wider range than Advance, reflecting CASBE's role later on the same pathway, where an Alberta SME is already involved in adopting and adapting the technology.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Alberta Innovates only funds reasonable costs incurred after an Investment Agreement is signed by Alberta Innovates and the Applicant. Costs incurred before the Investment Agreement is signed, costs greater than market prices, and costs incurred between non-arm's-length entities are ineligible. Please refer to Schedule C in the Investment Agreement posted on the CASBE web page for detailed information, including eligible and ineligible expenses.

KEY DATES

2026/27 ALBERTA INNOVATES CASBE DIRECT STREAM INTAKE

2026/27 Intake Opens	October 30, 2026
Expression of Interest Closing Date	December 18, 2026, at 4:00 pm
Targeted Full Proposal Invitation Date	By January 25, 2027
Full Proposal Closing Date	February 17, 2027
Targeted Agreement Execution Date	By March 15, 2027

ELIGIBILITY

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

The CASBE Program is open to:

- Researchers and teams from Alberta post-secondary institutions listed on the Government of Alberta publicly funded institution list. (The "Applicant" is the Institution; the "Applicant Representative" named in the application is the Principal Investigator or other representative leading/developing and submitting the application.
- For NSERC-Matching, the Applicant and Applicant Representative must meet eligibility requirements for NSERC's ARD or Alliance program, as applicable to institution-type.

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 past bad debt or otherwise not in good financial standing with Alberta Innovates, InnoTech Alberta and C-FER Technologies
- Have a physical presence in Alberta
- Notify Alberta Innovates immediately in the event of any change to the status of the Industry Partner (e.g., absence or loss of the Industry Partner) during the course of the project

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

To qualify for funding, all Projects must:

- Align with CASBE Program objectives, and meet Alberta Innovates' eligibility criteria
- For NSERC-Matching, the proposed Project must meet eligibility requirements for NSERC's ARD or Alliance program, as applicable to institution-type.
- involve emerging technologies and align to least one Alberta Innovates Innovation Priority Area in Appendix A.
- Include at least one Alberta SME as Industry Partner (multiple partners, including multinational enterprises, are encouraged in addition);
- Be completed within a two-year or lesser term;
- Involve technology within Technology Readiness Levels 2 to 6;

- Notify Alberta Innovates and NSERC (where applicable) immediately in the event of any change to the status of the Industry Partner (e.g., absence or loss of the Industry Partner) during the course of the project; and
- Comply with other criteria that Alberta Innovates may develop from time to time.

ALBERTA SME PARTNER ELIGIBILITY

The Alberta SME Industry Partner(s) are required to:

- Be a for-profit SME, with at least 2 full-time employees (FTE);
- Demonstrate that the relationship between the Applicant and Industry Partner(s) does not create a conflict of interest;
- Be committed to supporting the project through in-kind and/or cash contributions
- Have demonstrated operations (of at least 2 years) in Alberta and be 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 in 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 registered in Alberta; and
- Be in good financial and final reporting standing with Alberta Innovates, InnoTech Alberta and C-FER Technologies.

HOW TO APPLY

The CASBE Program application process proceeds in phases. If you have determined your project aligns with program objectives and requirements, proceed to Phase 1.

PHASE 1: CONNECT WITH YOUR INSTITUTION'S INNOVATION / TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER OFFICE

Before applying, researchers are strongly encouraged to reach out to their institution's innovation/technology transfer office to understand how the commercialization process works at their institution — including how intellectual property, industry engagement, and spin-out pathways are typically handled. This conversation helps applicants come into Phase 2 with a clearer sense of their project's commercialization path.

PHASE 2: ENGAGE WITH THE ALBERTA INNOVATES ET&T TEAM

Applicants connect with the Emerging Technology & Talent (ET&T) team to discuss project scope and alignment (optional but strongly recommended).

If the researcher doesn't yet have an Alberta SME partner lined up, the team will make best efforts to help identify and facilitate potential industry matches — since every CASBE project requires at least one Alberta SME as an Industry Partner.

Applicants should be prepared to discuss the intended project, market opportunity, alignment to Alberta Innovates Innovation Priority Area (Appendix A), and if relevant, emerging technology topic (Appendix B) the project will address.

NOTE: Contact the ET&T team for advice before submitting an application for a project previously submitted / similar to a previous application (re-application).

PHASE 3: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) SUBMISSION

Register on SmartSimple, our online application portal. Complete and submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) in SmartSimple.

PHASE 4: FULL PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Applicants who receive EOI approval are invited to submit a full proposal. Applications are reviewed according to the published intake timelines, subject to available annual budget.

- For NSERC-Matching: include on your Full Proposal application to Alberta Innovates and attach a PDF of the corresponding NSERC application (NSERC ARD for colleges and polytechnics, or NSERC Alliance for universities)- both active NSERC grants, and new

applications can be considered; a Gantt chart covering both the CASBE and NSERC R&D activities, description of the CASBE R&D activities, and a completed CASBE budget file with explanation will also be required as attachments to the Alberta Innovates application form in SmartSimple.

- Alberta Innovates Direct Stream: complete the Alberta Innovates application form in SmartSimple.

By submitting an application, applicants and co-applicants consent to the sharing of all information, including personal information, between Alberta Innovates and — for NSERC-Matched Stream projects — NSERC, for the purpose of application adjudication and awards.

PHASE 5: AGREEMENT

Successful applicants execute an Investment Agreement with Alberta Innovates to commence project activities. NSERC-Matched Pathway projects also execute a separate agreement with NSERC.

Once agreements are executed, the ET&T team will work with the researcher / team and the associated Post Secondary Institution innovation team to develop the project's wrap around commercialization support plan.

ALBERTA INNOVATES EVALUATION PROCESS

Alberta Innovates' evaluation process leverages internal and external subject-matter and business expertise to evaluate applications submitted.

Applications are assessed by Alberta Innovates to determine alignment with the CASBE Program objectives and intended outcomes. Alberta Innovates evaluates applications submitted to the program based on the following criteria:

- Eligibility criteria, as outlined in this guide;
- future market opportunity,
- project feasibility (technical, plan and team),
- training opportunities,
- impact and benefits to Alberta

Strong emphasis is placed on the future market opportunity and potential impacts of the proposed technology. Meeting all evaluation criteria does not guarantee funding, as awards are competitive.

Criteria followed by NSERC, for NSERC-Matched Stream applications — applicants are advised to check the criteria on the NSERC website for the specific program they are applying to.

At the expression of interest stage of evaluation, applications will be ranked, and a limited number of applications will be selected to go to the next stage of full application submission.

For NSERC-Matched applications: NSERC conducts its own review and evaluation of applications in addition to Alberta Innovates'.

Successful applicants execute an Investment Agreement with Alberta Innovates to commence project activities. For NSERC-Matched grants, NSERC will execute a separate agreement with the applicant.

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.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

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

To maximize the impact of these investments, our funding is tied to the achievement of results and outcomes. For this reason, Alberta Innovates funds on a milestone completion basis. This means the Applicant must submit a Progress and/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 https://albertainnovates.ca/programs/CASBE/ 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 Innovates 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

The CASBE Program is managed by Alberta Innovates' Emerging Technology and Talent (ET&T) team. The ET&T team provides funding, enabling, and matchmaking support to emerging technology researchers to increase the volume of commercial outcomes for Alberta's future prosperity. To learn more, visit albertainnovates.ca or contact us.

EMERGING TECH & TALENT TEAM - CASBE PROGRAM

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NSERC INQUIRIES:

NSERC CASBE Program webpage

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APPENDIX A: ALBERTA INNOVATES INNOVATION PRIORITY AREAS

APPLIED DIGITAL AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Harnessing data, artificial intelligence (AI), and cybersecurity to enable smarter industries and a stronger economy.

Alberta's digital future depends on strategic investments in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and secure data infrastructure. These technologies will power next-generation industries, enable precision medicine and digital health breakthroughs, and transform how businesses and governments make data-driven decisions.

- AI, Quantum Technologies & Cybersecurity: Building Alberta's leadership in advanced computing and secure digital infrastructure.
- Digital Health: Using AI and real-time data analytics to improve health outcomes and healthcare innovation while promoting responsible AI development/adoption.
- Data-Driven Decision Making and Smart Infrastructure: Strengthening Alberta's digital backbone, from smart cities to industrial automation.
- Data Centres: Expanding Alberta's capacity to process and store high-value data for industry applications.

HEALTH, AGRICULTURAL, AND LIFE SCIENCE INNOVATION

Unlocking Alberta's potential in health, biotechnology, life sciences, sustainable agriculture, and bio-industrial solutions.

Innovation in health, agriculture, and environmental science will ensure Alberta's long-term economic diversification and global leadership in biomanufacturing, regenerative medicine, and environmental sustainability.

- Next-Generation Therapeutics: Driving innovation in drug discovery, precision health, medical devices, diagnostics, natural health products, and clinical trials that reach all Albertans.
- Sustainable Agriculture and One Health Approaches: Developing advanced agricultural technologies and integrating human, animal, and environmental health research to tackle emerging diseases and ecosystem challenges.
- Bio-Industrial Technologies for Agriculture and Environment: Developing bioplastics, biofuels, and sustainable biomaterials to reduce environmental impact and support a greener economy.

ADVANCED MATERIALS, DEFENCE AND AEROSPACE

Transforming Alberta's natural resources into high-value materials and cutting-edge aerospace innovations.

By investing in novel materials and aerospace technologies, Alberta can move beyond raw resource extraction and position itself as a leader in advanced manufacturing, automation, and high-technology aviation.

- Novel Materials Development: Advancing carbon fibre, critical minerals, and bioplastics to create high-value industrial applications.
- Aerospace and Aviation Innovation: Supporting next-generation aviation initiatives, drone technology, and space-related research and development (R&D).
- Advanced Manufacturing and Automation: Investing in robotics, additive manufacturing, and AI-driven industrial processes to modernize production.

NATURAL RESOURCE RECOVERY

Maximizing Alberta's resource potential through innovation in extraction, processing, and value-added energy applications.

Alberta's resource economy is a pillar of its prosperity. By investing in advanced recovery methods, critical mineral processing, and next-generation energy solutions, we are ensuring that the province remains a leader in responsible resource development, enhanced efficiency, and new value-added industries. These investments will strengthen Alberta's energy sector while unlocking new opportunities in industrial transformation and global supply chains.

- Advanced Resource Recovery and Processing: Developing cleaner, more efficient methods for extracting and processing Alberta's energy resources, including enhanced bitumen recovery and low-impact extraction techniques.
- Critical Minerals and Alternative Resource Utilization: Expanding Alberta's role in supplying critical minerals for global markets and repurposing natural resources for high-value applications, such as advanced materials and energy storage technologies.
- Next-Generation Energy Solutions: Investing in hydrogen, waste-to-energy, CCUS, and new energy technologies to ensure Alberta's long-term leadership in industrial innovation and global energy markets.