

Micro Voucher Program

September 24, 2024

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 Micro Voucher Program is managed through the Entrepreneurial Investments business unit within Alberta Innovates. Entrepreneurial Investments supports innovation across all sectors in Alberta by providing Coaching, Community, and Capital to Alberta businesses commercializing new technology with the goal to grow the province's economy.

Program Overview

We recognize Alberta's small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) as an integral component to diversify and build the Alberta economy. De-risking novel technological solutions is a critical success factor on the pathway to commercialization and scale-up.

Alberta Innovates supports de-risking technology solutions by providing non-dilutive funding and access to senior business advisors with real-world commercialization expertise to actively guide SMEs through the commercialization pathway. The Micro Voucher Program (the "Program") supports SMEs in identifying early problem/solution fit and moving towards product/market fit. It may act as a "trigger" for follow-on investment to accelerate growth and scale-up. The Program is part of a suite of SME funding programs we offer that are focused on the commercialization of technological solutions.

The objectives of the Program are to:

- Increase business outcomes
- Create globally competitive SMEs

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

- Net jobs created
- Revenue/export growth
- Technology progression & scale up

Funding

The Program provides support for up to \$10,000.

- The applicant must hire a service provider for a maximum six-month project to advance their technology closer to commercialization
- Funding is paid directly to the applicant and disbursed upon receipt and approval of a final report
- The applicant is required to contribute a minimum 25 percent cash contribution to the total eligible project costs at the project start date. If the Service Provider agrees, the Applicant contribution may be divided in half; one at the beginning of the Project and the final half at the end of the Project.
- Alberta Innovates encourages co-funding of Projects with other funding agencies but employs a stacking limit to ensure there is sufficient financial commitment from the Applicant. The stacking limit is employed as follows: the maximum level of total government assistance, whether from federal, provincial/territorial, or municipal sources, cannot exceed 75% of the eligible Project costs.

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 Micro Voucher Program [web page](#) for detailed information, including eligible and ineligible expenses.

Key Dates

The Applicant may apply at any time, as this Program is a continuous intake.

Eligibility

We designed this program for SMEs to work in collaboration with one service provider to advance the technology-based business opportunity closer to commercialization and revenue. Project activities may include:

- Design, engineering and prototype development;
- Product testing and refinement;
- Patent development; (excluding patent maintenance fees)
- Advanced market assessment or segmentation analysis;
- Advanced business and/or marketing strategies; and/or
- Other technology development activities that will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

See the '[Examples of Eligible Activities](#)' document on our webpage for more examples.

Ideal applicants will have:

- reached the [Concepting stage of development](#)
- have a [Technology Readiness Level](#) of 3-7
- completed initial market and industry assessment work to demonstrate market size
- a founding team and/or advisors and
- validated their first potential customers through customer discovery work.

Applicant Eligibility

The Micro Voucher Program is open to:

- For-Profit Organizations

In addition, to qualify for funding, the Applicant must:

- 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 incorporated in Alberta AND/OR incorporated in another jurisdiction and extra provincially registered in Alberta;
- Be a General Partnership, Limited Partnership, or Limited Liability Partnership and registered in Alberta.

All Applicants must also:

- Exist as a corporate person, with up-to-date corporate filings;
- Be authorized to undertake the proposed project, and execute a grant 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;
- Be an Alberta-based company with an Albertan footprint, which is determined by the following: significant physical and corporate operational presence in Alberta, appropriate Alberta ownership, and discernable intent that operational benefits will flow primarily within the province of Alberta.

Please note: For Applicants **not** at post-secondary institutions, Alberta Innovates may perform corporate, bankruptcy and litigation searches, and conduct other forms of due diligence on the Applicant company and its principals.

Service Provider Eligibility

Service providers are required to:

- Exist as a corporate person, with up-to-date corporate filings; and
- Be authorized to undertake the proposed project;
- Demonstrate the relationship between the Applicant and Service Provider does not create a conflict of interest;
- Be at arm's length from the Applicant (i.e., no legal relationship with the Applicant);
- Provide the service(s) and/or product(s) at reasonable market rates;
- 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.

Note: For partners, collaborators and/or service providers **not** at post-secondary institutions, Alberta Innovates may perform corporate, bankruptcy and litigation searches, and other forms of due diligence.

Project Eligibility

To qualify for funding, all Projects must:

- Align with the objectives of the Micro Voucher Program
- Provide a current quotation for the work to be completed during the project
- Projects are eligible to receive only one Micro Voucher grant per innovation
- Be completed within the 6-month term
- Comply with other criteria that Alberta Innovates may develop from time to time

Project Expenses

Schedule C in the [Investment Agreement](#) outlines the eligible and ineligible expenses for projects in the Micro-Voucher Program.

How to Apply?

Step 1: Project Scoping

Applicant identifies the project need and obtains a quote from a service provide to complete to the project.

All interested applicants are strongly encouraged to engage with a [Technology Development Advisor](#) (TDA) prior to applying online. TDAs are available to provide guidance and coaching and assess an applicant's Micro Voucher readiness. They can recommend suitable alternative Alberta Innovates funding programs and help direct applicants to external funding opportunities.

Step 2: Application & Evaluation

Access and submit application form on the [online application portal](#) at any time.

Applications outline:

- Current state of the opportunity
- Applicant's business readiness
- Participation of a service provider
- Intended project and benefits
- Applicant's current financial state

Step 3: Project Management

For approved applications, the Applicant will execute an Investment Agreement with Alberta Innovates to proceed with the activities of the Project.

A TDA will be assigned to the Project, if one is not already engaged, and will monitor the progress of the project, providing coaching to the Applicant as needed. Success applicants are expected to actively participate in all project management activities and work with their TDA.

Evaluation Process

All applications are reviewed and evaluated to determine fit with the Micro Voucher Program objectives and intended outcomes. Alberta Innovates' staff and external expert reviewers are engaged to evaluate Applications.

Alberta Innovates evaluates submitted Applications to the Program based on the technology, the business opportunity, applicant risks and the overall potential size of the return to Alberta against the performance outcomes. A variety of common business and technical factors such as: the management team, market conditions, competitive advantage, product/market fit, go to market plan, financials, technical feasibility and growth/export potential are also considered.

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.

An Applicant whose application is declined by Alberta Innovates may, on a one-time basis, re-apply to Alberta Innovates to address and correct any deficiencies or issues.

All investment decisions are at the sole discretion of Alberta Innovates.

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](#) 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

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ENTREPRENEURIAL INVESTMENTS

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APPENDIX A: Evaluation Criteria

Applications for Micro-Voucher Program will be reviewed based on several broad criteria, with more specific details evident through the information requested in the application form. A summary of those criteria follows:

All applications are reviewed and evaluated to determine fit with the Micro-Voucher Program objectives and intended outcomes. Alberta Innovates' staff and external expert reviewers are engaged to evaluate Applications. Alberta Innovates evaluates submitted Applications to the Program based on the technology, the business opportunity, applicant risks and the overall potential size of the return to Alberta against the performance outcomes. A variety of common business and technical factors such as: the management team, market conditions, competitive advantage and product/market fit, go to market plan, financials, technical feasibility and export potential are also considered. 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.

All investment decisions are at the sole discretion of Alberta Innovates.

Assess your company for Alberta Footprint by reviewing the criteria noted below.

All companies must be incorporated in Alberta AND/OR incorporated in another jurisdiction and extra provincially registered in Alberta, OR be a General Partnership, Limited Partnership or Limited Liability Partnership and registered in Alberta.

Next, if you meet the following Alberta Footprint criteria you are an Alberta company that can apply to our program.

- Over 50% total Alberta ownership
- And over 50% Alberta employees (FTE, PTE, and Contractors)
- And an Alberta Founder residing in Alberta as primary residence, where income tax is paid

If you do not meet the criteria above you may still be eligible and the following evaluation criteria will be used to assess your Alberta Footprint:

Alberta Footprint Evaluation Criteria for Entrepreneurial Investment Programs
Location of main operations (operations, salaries, taxes, expenses, license, permits, assets, and capital flow) and head office.
Portion of physical assets based in Alberta if applicable to your business model.
Number of Alberta-based T4 employees currently employed by the applicant and percentage of total jobs in the company based in Alberta.
Taxable revenues, current and future, flowing back to Alberta.
Percent of Alberta Ownership as demonstrated on Capitalization tables and registration documents. Due to unclear ownership and liquidity of shares, publicly traded companies are only eligible if significant Alberta ownership and control can be demonstrated. The Alberta ownership does not include Alberta investment firms that have investors from outside Alberta.
Number of Founders based in Alberta
Connections to Alberta eco-system, industry, strategic partners, and resources to grow business in Alberta. Current and future growth in Alberta to promote jobs, economic growth, and benefit to Albertans.
Publicly identified as, and corporate messaging consistent with, being an Alberta company
Collaborative support from other provinces on a large strategic win for Canada

These criteria are considered together to determine if there is sufficient Alberta benefit.