NSERC Alliance Advantage: A Deep Dive into Applying

RESEARCH COMMONS

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Agenda

> Alliance Advantage Overview

> Common Issues and Examples
- Proposal
- Budget
- Risk Assessment

> Other Alliance Programs

> Q&A

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Program Overview

NSERC Alliance Advantage overview

› What is **Alliance Advantage** (formerly Option 1)?
  • Per NSERC: "Alliance Advantage grants are for partner-driven projects. They fund projects focused on the **partners' goals**, with at least one partner **sharing in the costs of research**."
  • Projects focused on societal impact should pursue Alliance Society (formerly Option 2)

› Funding
  • $20k to $1M per year for 1 to 5 years
  • 2:1 cost sharing from NSERC — NSERC contributes $2 for every $1 from the partner for direct costs of research

› Eligible partners
  • Private sector, Canadian public sector, Canadian not-for-profit
  • **NOT** venture capital, incubators, individuals, hospitals, R&D organizations, foreign govt/NGOs

› For more information
  • NSERC Alliance Advantage website
  • NSERC Alliance presentation from March
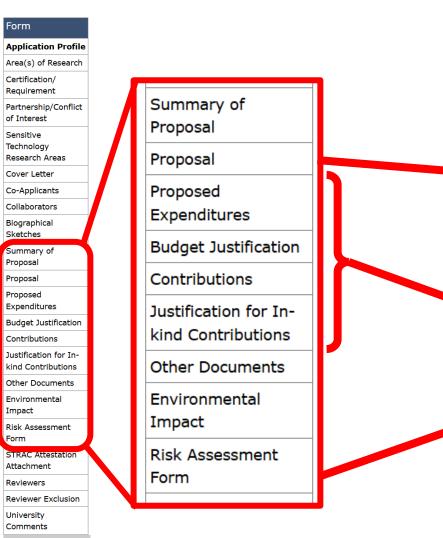 • Research Commons/Innovation York session on building research partnerships

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Areas of Focus

Form
Application Profile
Area(s) of Research
Certification/ Requirement
Partnership/Conflict of Interest
Sensitive Technology Research Areas
Cover Letter
Co-Applicants
Collaborators
Biographical Sketches
Summary of Proposal
Proposal
Proposed Expenditures
Budget Justification
Contributions
Justification for In-kind Contributions
Other Documents
Environmental Impact
Risk Assessment Form
STRAC Attestation Attachment
Reviewers
Reviewer Exclusion
University Comments

> Once you create an application in the portal, there are several components to fill out
> For section-by-section instructions, refer to the Form 101 instructions

> This presentation focuses on a few key areas:
> - Proposal
>   - Background
>   - Research Plan
>   - Training Plan
>   - Benefits to Canada
> - Budget
>   - Portal budget table
>   - Overhead
>   - Justification
> - Risk Assessment

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  - Justification
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Common Issues

Proposal Template

> Alliance Advantage grants **must** follow the template

> The proposal page limits depend on the requested funding amount

Size of project	Small	Medium	Large
Average annual request	$20k to $75k	$75k to $300k	$300k to $1M
Review mechanism	NSERC File Managers or External reviewers *	External reviewers	
Maximum total number of pages	7	11	27
Expected assessment time	5 to 9 weeks	9 to 18 weeks	14 to 24 weeks

> The template is split into six sections, each with bullet points to address
> - The bullet points **cannot** be deleted in the final document
> - Each bullet point must be addressed

> This presentation focuses on the bullet points that are most commonly unaddressed/underaddressed
> - Many of these points were added in 2024

BACKGROUND
- Explain the challenge to be addressed, the importance of the topic and the need for new concepts or directions.
- Outline the objectives of the project and briefly explain its anticipated outcomes and impact.
- Position the proposed research relative to other efforts and to the state-of-the-art.

Insert your text here, responding to each of the above points

PARTNERSHIP
- List all partner organizations participating in the project. For each, describe their core activities and how they align with the project, their need for the proposed project, and their experience related to it, such as efforts to date to address the challenge.
- Describe each partner organization's active role in the project, including defining the research questions, designing the research plan, collaborating or contributing to the research activities, co-supervising trainees and monitoring progress.
- Describe how the partner organizations will translate, mobilize and/or apply the research results to achieve the intended outcomes.
- Explain the value and importance of each partner organization's involvement and other in-kind contributions to achieving the project's intended outcomes. If applicable, discuss how the combination of partner organizations is beneficial to the project.

Insert your text here, responding to each of the above points

RESEARCH PLAN
- Specify the research objectives and expected results. Describe the planned research activities, methodology and experimental design.
- Provide approximate timelines for the activities, milestones and deliverables. You may use a Gantt chart, table or diagram.
- Describe how equity, diversity and inclusion are considered in the research process (e.g., research questions, design, methodology, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of results) and how these considerations are integrated where relevant.

Insert your text here, responding to each of the above points

TEAM
- List the applicant, any co-applicants, key participating staff of the partner organizations and any other key academic team members. For each, explain how their knowledge, expertise, experience and contributions align with the proposed project and describe their role in the project, as well as their roles and capabilities in training and mentoring trainees.
- Briefly describe the plan for managing the project, along with the qualifications, roles and responsibilities of the team members involved in this respect.

Insert your text here, responding to each of the above points

TRAINING PLAN
- Describe the learning experiences the project will provide, including the nature of interactions between trainees (undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows) and partner organizations.
- Describe the research and professional skills that trainees will develop through these experiences and through their roles in the project.
- Explain how the research and professional skills gained by the trainees will prepare them for their future careers.
- Describe challenges to equity, diversity and inclusion in the context of your project's training environment and specify concrete practices you will implement to address them. You are encouraged to cite evidence supporting the proposed practices and to describe how you will monitor and adapt your actions based on non-demographic indicators of success.

Insert your text here, responding to each of the above points

IMPACT AND BENEFITS TO CANADA
- Explain how and the extent to which the proposed research will generate new knowledge in the natural sciences or engineering disciplines and/or develop or advance new technologies.
- Considering the partner organizations' plans to use the research results, discuss how the project will lead to new or improved technologies, products, processes, services, policies, standards or regulations in Canada.
- Describe how and the extent to which the project's intended outcomes will lead to economic, environmental, and/or other societal benefits to Canada and Canadians.

Insert your text here, responding to each of the above points

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Background

- Make sure to reference the work of others
- State-of-the-art can include both academic and industrial/governmental because the partner is non-academic

1.3 ███████████████████████████████ systems proposed in academic literature can recognize only simple tasks or struggle to adapt to variations in the surrounding space [5], [6]. Therefore, it is imperative to initiate research that focuses on developing ███████████ that can detect ████████████████████████ while being robust to environmental conditions, thus achieving complete ████████████.

The academic literature on ██████████████████████ applications is very thin [1,2,3] to the point that there is insufficient knowledge base for system level engineering design into ████████████████████ This being considered, the outcomes outlined would represent a significant step towards better understanding, characterizing and predicting ████████ and create a strong position for ████ to gain competitive advantage in the ████████████ market.

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Partnership

> The success of Alliance Advantage applications depends on showing that the partner(s) are very eager for this collaboration

> Need to show that the partner will benefit after the current project scope is complete

To mobilize and apply the outcomes of the proposed research, York will provide ████████ reports and results from analysis to ██████ and York and ███████ team members will co-author peer-reviewed journal and international conference papers on the research findings. The research plan specifies 17 deliverables, which include ████████████████ and at least 6 opportunities for journal / conference publications. ████████ will be able to apply various types of ████████████ to its ████████████ to enhance its current ████████████ services to provide faster, more accurate and more robust ████████████ to current and future customers. While the current ████████████████████████ is industry leading and can provide ████████████ ████████████████████████ there is potential for improvements. Accurate ████████ estimates can reduce the ████████████████████ processing from minutes to instantaneous. Accurate ████████ can also reduce variations in ████████████ providing great ██ accuracy. And, while ████████████ can produce larger errors in ████████████ at specific ████████ accurate real-time and predictive ████████████ can mitigate these effects, producing more consistent ████████ over time and space. The overall result is more consistent and confident ████████ which will allow for greater use in difficult environments, e.g., urban applications, and for, e.g., safety-of-life uses.

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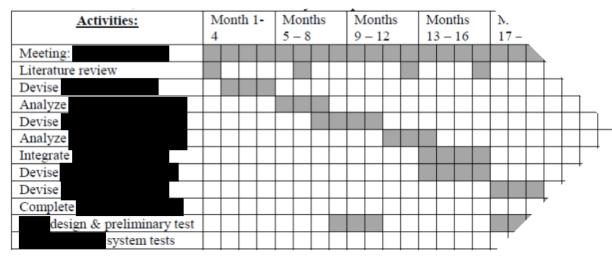Insert your text here, responding to each of the above points

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Research Plan

- Clear project timeline must be provided
- Visual representation is highly recommended
  - Generally, when NSERC instructions say, "you may use", this means it is really desired

Team & Training Plan

> Team includes PI, co-applicants, and collaborators (including at least one representative per partner) but **does not** include HQP

> The training plan should mention benefits to HQP of their interaction with partner(s)

> EDI is always a core component for NSERC applications
> - Read the NSERC and NFRF guides on EDI
> - Consider research practice (recruitment, mentorship) **always**, and research design (research subjects, data collection) **if applicable** — and justify if not applicable
> - Statistics can help to show barriers
> - Concrete examples of practices give reviewers context
> - Consider both recruitment and retention
> - Explain how you will measure impact and adapt
> - Remember: "Trainee demographic data **should not** be submitted. It is not requested or required to assess impacts resulting from consideration of equity, diversity and inclusion in the research and training environment. How an individual self-identifies is considered personal and confidential information."

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- Describe how and the extent to which the project's intended outcomes will lead to economic, environmental, and/or other societal benefits to Canada and Canadians.

Insert your text here, responding to each of the above points

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Benefits to Canada

> Because this is Canadian government funding, success depends on showing the benefit to the Canadian public

> Benefits to Canada from partner need to be mentioned

> Overall project benefits to Canada can be economic, environmental, societal

Specific Leads: Canada has already aimed to reduce greenhouse emissions by 30 million tonnes by the end of 2030 which will be 40-45% from 2005 levels. In addition, Canada targets to boost ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮ by up to ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ per year by 2030, thus achieving Net-Zero emissions of GHG by 2050 and contributing towards the betterment of the environment (Canada, 2024). However, the current pace is low due to limited policy implementations and higher taxes on biofuels leading toward lower biofuel consumption. Thus, only a ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ route will not be enough to meet the goal, *hence* ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮ routes through ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ would certainly aid, not only in increasing the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ but also in decreasing pressure on Canadian farms ▮▮▮▮. With this aim, ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ focus on using ▮▮▮▮▮▮ as a feedstock for ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ It would be a far greener and more sustainable way to reduce GHG emissions by 90% than from ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ will focus on developing a strategy to maximize the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ while keeping the low environmental impact and economically acceptable. On the other hand, ▮▮▮▮▮▮ involvement in the project will ensure that the developed technology is practical and feasible for large-scale production. The proposed project will also help address United Nations-Sustainable Development Goals i.e., 7 SDG (Affordable and Clean Energy), 12 SDG (Responsible Consumption and Production, and 13 SDG (Climate Action) for ▮▮▮▮▮ The project will aid in valorizing the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ by converting the ▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ while endorsing a green and sustainable environment.

Overall impact and benefits to Canada include: a) Environmental: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮ could reduce 50 – 90%. of GHG emissions promoting circular economy; b) Economic: Stimulating new job opportunities in ▮▮▮▮▮▮ sectors. The ▮▮▮▮▮▮ can potentially make Canada a global ▮▮▮ leader while creating revenues through the export of advanced ▮▮ ▮▮▮ technologies. c)Social: Promoting ▮▮▮▮▮▮ by reducing competition between ▮▮ and ▮▮ sectors and fostering social benefits through clean environment.

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Budget

> Four sections relevant to budget

> The contributions from partners are added through the **Contributions** tab

> Make sure to select "Partner organization recognized for cost-sharing", otherwise requesting any money from NSERC Alliance will give an error
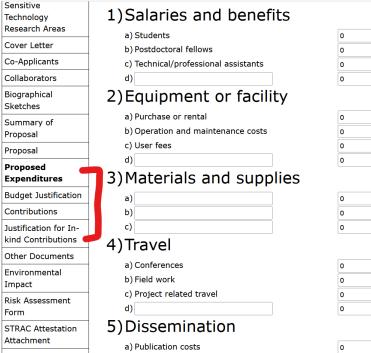
Budget

> Pressing Next gives a space to enter company and contact information, as well as a table for contributions in three categories:
> - Cash contributions (direct costs)
> - In-kind Contributions
> - Overhead (indirect costs)

Organization Category : Partner organization recognized for cost-sharing

Provide the full name and email address of the authorized contact person for the organization.

Family Name :

Given Name :

Email Address :

Organization and department or branch

Select the organization name and department or branch from the list. [List...]

Organization name :

Department or Branch :

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Cash contributions to direct costs of research	0	0	0	0	0
In-kind Contributions					
1) Salaries for scientific and technical staff	0	0	0	0	0
2) Donation of equipment, software	0	0	0	0	0
3) Donation of material	0	0	0	0	0
4) Field work logistics	0	0	0	0	0
5) Provision of services	0	0	0	0	0
6) Use of organization's facilities	0	0	0	0	0
7) Salaries of managerial and administrative staff	0	0	0	0	0
8)	0	0	0	0	0
Total In-kind contributions	0	0	0	0	0
Contribution to postsecondary institution overhead	0	0	0	0	0

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Budget

> Click Save!

> Lock/Invite section will be activated

> An invitation will be sent to the email id of the authorized contact from the partner

> The authorized contact from the partner can preview the application

> Click "Verify Form" in the confirm and submit tab. Must click "Submit"

> Accept Partner Terms and Conditions.

> Status will change from "Invitation sent – Invitation accepted – Completed by partner

> If changes are required, edit and repeat the process!

Save	Preview	Portfolio	Instructions	Logout

Form

| Application Profile |
| Area(s) of Research |
| Certification/ Requirement |
| Partnership/Conflict of Interest |
| Sensitive Technology Research Areas |
| Cover Letter |
| Co-Applicants |
| Collaborators |
| Biographical Sketches |
| Summary of Proposal |
| Proposal |
| Proposed Expenditures |

Form 101 - Contributions from Supporting Organizations

Important: You **must save** the information about one organization **before adding another one.**
Before the authorized contact for the partner organization can be invited, you must complete the financial information in the table below, save the page, and then click the Lock/Invite button.

Previous	Next	Add	Delete	Lock/Invite	Edit

Record 1 of 1   **Status:** New

Organization Category :   Partner organization recognized for cost-sharing

Provide the full name and email address of the authorized contact person for the organization.

Family Name :   Soma

Given Name :   Tripathi

Email Address :   soma.tripathi@lassonde.yor

Organization and department or branch

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Overhead

- University Policy. Default overhead: 40% on direct cash. Eligible for reduction to 25% (Tri-council match, IP arrangement)
- Approval is required from Faculty and VPRI

SITUATION 1: THE INDUSTRY DOES NOT PROVIDE EXTRA CASH FOR OH

	Year 1	Calculation details
Total industry cash	$30,000	
Direct Cash	$24,000	$30,000/1.25 = $24,000
Indirect cash (Overhead)	$6,000	0.25×$24,000
NSERC Leverage	$48,000	2×Direct cash (i.e. $24,000)
Total Proposed expenditure for NSERC Alliance application	$72,000	Industry cash ($24,000) + NSERC Leverage ($48,000)

SITUATION 2: THE INDUSTRY PROVIDES EXTRA CASH FOR OH

	Year 1	Calculation Details
Total industry cash	$30,000	
Direct Cash	$30,000	
Indirect cash (Overhead)	$7,500	0.25×$30,000
NSERC Leverage	$60,000	2×$30,000
Total Proposed expenditure for NSERC Alliance application	$90,000	Industry cash ($30,000) + NSERC Leverage ($60,000)

Note: For this situation, the total incoming cash from industry is $37,500 ($30,000 + $7,500)

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Justification of Budget & In-Kind Contributions

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

> Provide justification for every line item in the **proposed expenditure table**

> Arrange the document in the same order as the proposed expenditure table

> Provide sufficient details to justify the requested budget

> Use tables to keep the data visually friendly. Don't expect reviewers to use a calculator to understand the data. Less work for reviewers!

IN-KIND JUSTIFICATION

> Provide justification for every line item in the **partner organization table**

> In-kind contributions from the partners are necessary, to show that they are invested in the project outcomes
> - *From NSERC: "This information will be used to assess the level and nature of the partner organization's involvement and the importance of its contribution to the success of the project's success."*

> Examples of in-kind contributions
> - Staff time – Name, role, provide hourly salary rate and total time intended to invest in the project
> - Donations of services, materials (could be data) and equipment, travel expenditures for staff

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Research Security Requirements

Private Sector Involvement

> Is a private sector entity involved in the proposal?

> If yes, National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships (NSGRP) approval from Research Security is required

> Upload the form under "Risk Assessment Form" section

Sensitive Technology Research and Affiliations of Concern (STRAC Policy)

> Does the research advance a STRA?

> If Yes: Check Yes for the section "Sensitive Technology Research Area"

> Upload STRAC Attestation for all named researchers (PI, co-applicants, and collaborators — including participants from partner) in the "STRAC Attestation Attachment" section

- Further resources
  - York Safeguarding Research website
  - York Research Security presentation
  - Contact researchsecurity@yorku.ca

Other NSERC
Alliance Programs

Other Alliance Opportunities

> Alliance Society
- Addresses societal problems using a large project team
- NSERC can cover up to 100% of project costs

> Alliance International Collaboration
- Matching funding to work with an international partner who has received funding from their national funding body
  - Includes Horizon Europe
- Need to apply within 3 months of when partner receives notice of award

> Alliance International Catalyst
- Suspended in October 2024; no updates yet about when it may re-open

> Alliance–Mitacs
- Allows partner funding to be leveraged twice
- Mitacs Accelerate grants have currently all been used; projected to become available in April 2025

> Alliance–OCI (Ontario Centre for Innovation)
- Maximum project length of 12 months
- Funding leverage of 1–1–1 NSERC–OCI–industrial partner (50% of industry support may be in-kind)
- Request of $20k–$30k from each contributor
- Rapid response time (35 days) from OCI

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	Advantage	Society	International Catalyst	International Collaboration	Advantage–Mitacs Accelerate	Advantage–OCI
Scope	Partner Driven Projects	Projects aimed for society-wide impact Societal Impact Making Connections Broad Output	Initiate partnerships with international collaborators from the academic sector. Projects with global importance that generate benefit for Canada	participate in international projects and leverage International Funding. Projects with global importance that generate benefit for Canada	Partnership with Mitacs Accelerate for additional funding within Alliance applications for enhanced student training	Collaborative Research partnership with the OCI's C2C program
Value	$20,000 to $1 million per year	$20,000 to $1 million per year	$25,000	$100,000 per year	$20,000 to $1 million per year	Up to $90k
Duration	1 to 5 years	1 to 5 years	1 year	Up to 3 years	1 to 5 years	Up to 1 year
Cost Sharing	at least one partner sharing in the costs of research	cash contribution is not required however, at least one partner that should be recognized for cost sharing	Not required	The funding obtained by the international academic collaborator(s) will be recognized for cost sharing. Upto $100,000 per year	at least one partner sharing in the costs of research + Mitacs contribution	$20,000 to $30,000 from the industry partner (50% cash, 50% in-kind)
NSERC Contribution to project costs	66.7% (2:1 leverage)	100%	100%	depend on the amount of funding obtained by your international academic collaborator(s)	66.7% (2:1 leverage) Partner cash - $10k Mitacs Leverage - $10k NSERC - $20k Total project cost - $40k	1:1 Partner - $20k-$30k (50% Cash, 50% in-kind) NSERC - $20k -$30k OCI - $20k-$30k
Partner	Private sector, government or not-for-profit organizations	Private sector, government or not-for-profit organizations	Academic sector	Academic sector	NSERC- Private sector, government or not-for-profit organizations Mitacs - Private sector, not-for-profit sector	Ontario-based for-profit SMEs • 5-499 global FTEs and • Incorporated for at least 2 years

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	Advantage	Society	International Catalyst	International Collaboration	Advantage–Mitacs Accelerate	Advantage–OCI
Research Security	NSGRP approval and STRAC attestation may be required	NSGRP approval and STRAC attestation may be required	STRAC attestation may be required	STRAC attestation may be required	NSGRP approval and STRAC attestation may be required	NSGRP approval and STRAC attestation may be required
Overhead	Default 40% on Partner Cash Contribution. 25% Overhead reduction may be eligible if the IP stays with PI or split IP arrangement	Default 40% on Partner Cash Contribution (If any). 25% Overhead reduction may be eligible if the IP stays with PI or split IP arrangement	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Overhead charged on the partner cash remaining after Mitacs Leverage. If all the partner cash is leveraged for Mitacs, no Overhead	Overhead charged on the partner cash contribution
Evaluation	Administrative Review + Merit Assessment	Administrative Review + Merit Assessment	Administrative Review + Merit Assessment	Administrative Review + Merit Assessment	Mitacs Administrative review +NSERC Administrative Review + Merit Assessment	OCI Review + NSERC Administrative Review + Merit Assessment
Merit Assessment	$20-$75k – usually 5-9 weeks but could be more $75k-$300k – 9-18 weeks $300k-$1M – 14-28 weeks	Two-step Merit Assessment Step 1 - Multidisciplinary and Multisectoral selection committee Step 2: Merit Assessment (same as Advantage)	5-9 weeks	5-9 weeks	Mitacs Administrative review – 2-3 weeks NSERC Merit Assessment (same as Advantage)	OCI review – 35 days NSERC Merit Assessment (same as Advantage)

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Resources

Faculty Research Office Support

› Science: Stuart Macgregor | sciro1@yorku.ca

› Lassonde: Soma Tripathi, Ross Arnold | rso@lassonde.yorku.ca

› [Other Research Support Offices](#)

NSERC Resources

› [Alliance Advantage overview](#)

› [Form 101 instructions](#)

› [Proposal template](#)

› [Alliance grant application checklist](#)

› [Portal login](#)

Research Commons Resources

› [NSERC Alliance Grants Information Session](#)

› [Building Partnerships and Collaboration for NSERC Alliance & SSHRC Innovation](#)

› [Research Security at York](#)

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Thank You