



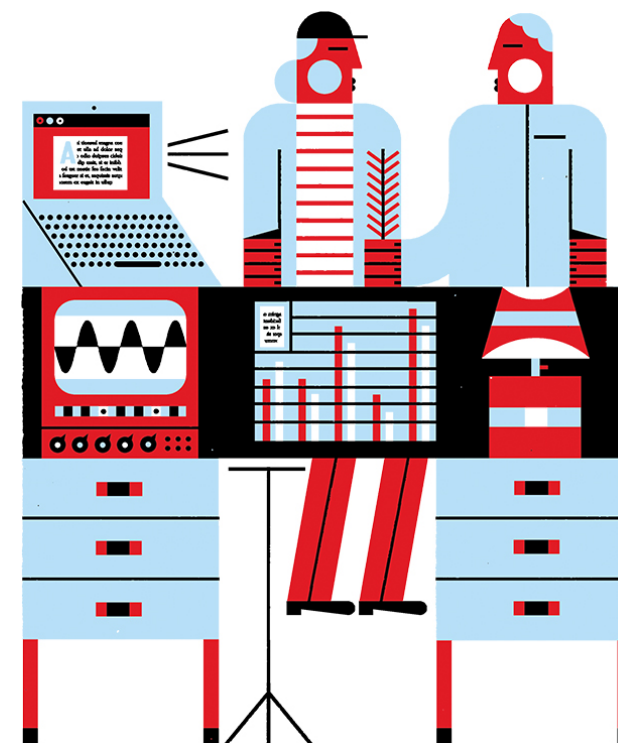
Alliance Advantage grants: Merit evaluation and funding decisions

Presented by: NSERC Alliance

Accurate as of October 2025. Please consult the Alliance website for the most up-to-date information

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Review of Alliance Advantage

Alliance Advantage grants support:

- Research in the natural sciences and engineering (NSE) led by strong, complementary, collaborative teams
- Collaborations with partner organizations from multiple sectors (private, public, not-for-profit)
- Projects that will generate new knowledge and accelerate the application of research results for the benefit of Canadians

Review of Alliance Advantage

Overview

Who can apply:	University researchers working with partner organizations, co-applicants and collaborators
Essential:	Cash and in-kind contributions from partner organizations
How much:	\$20,000 to \$1 million per year
Cost-sharing:	2:1 leverage (on cash contributions only)
How long:	1 to 5 years
When to apply:	Anytime

Review of Alliance Advantage

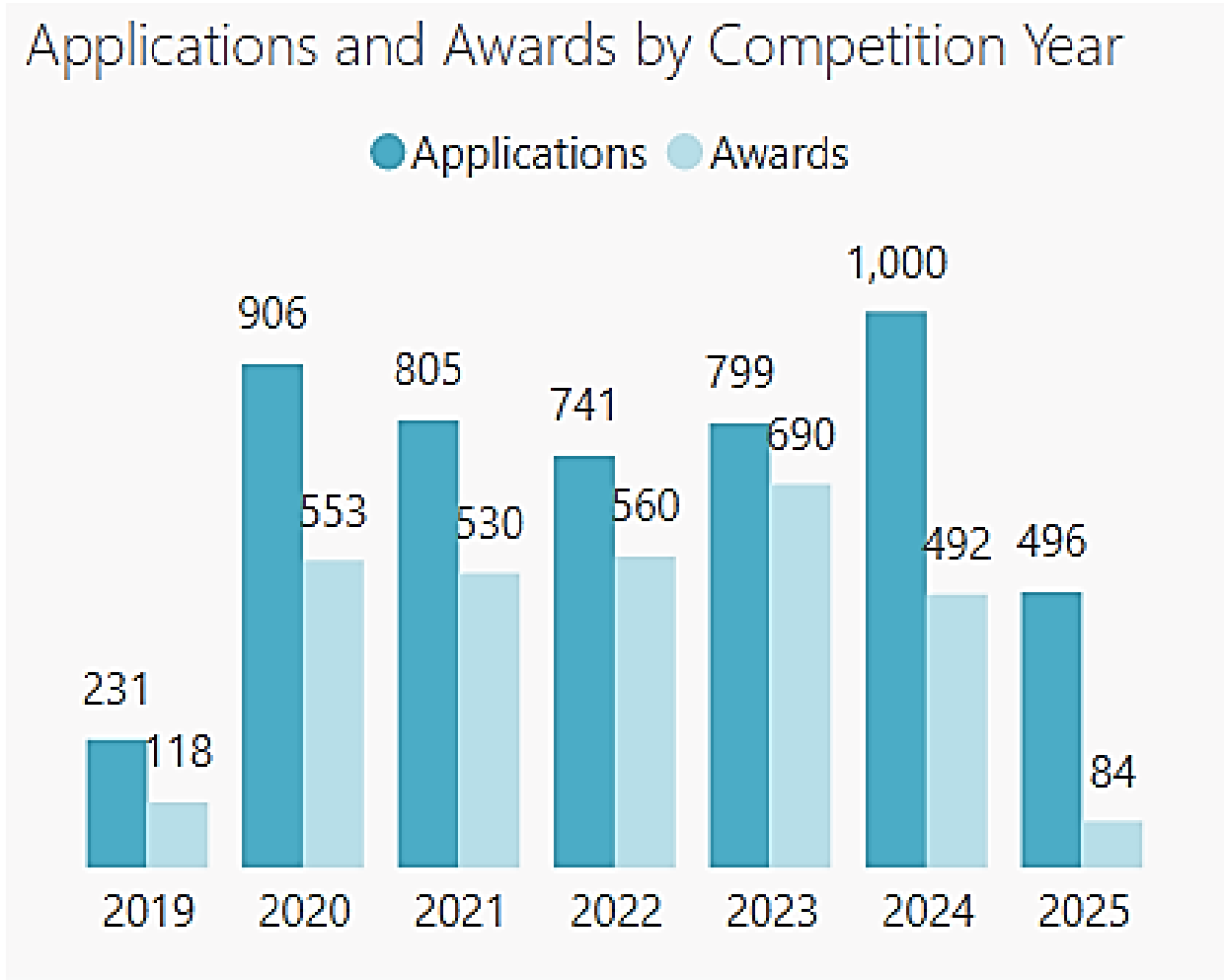
How to apply

1. Know your partner: work with a potential partner to define shared research goals and expectations.
2. Consult research partnerships office, complete required attestations, and address potential conflicts of interest
3. Apply at any time (Follow instructions and review checklist)
 - Proposal template, Form 100A & CCV
 - Partner Organization Forms
 - National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships Risk Assessment Form (if partners are private sector) & Attestation for Research Security
4. Submit a complete application through NSERC Online



Le CRSNG invite les personnes candidates à présenter leur demande dans la langue de leur choix, soit en français ou en anglais.

NSERC invites applicants to submit their application in the language of their choice, either French or English.



Alliance Dashboard September 2025
Alliance Advantage, Mitacs, OCI and Alberta Innovate CASBE
(Applications still in progress not reflected in # Awards)

Between 2022 to 2024:

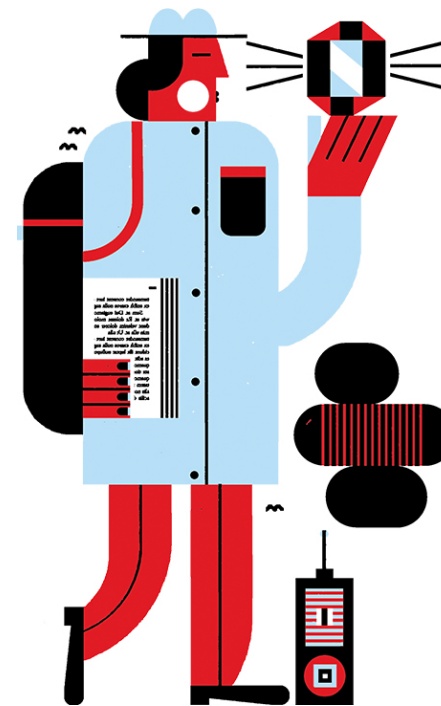
- Number of applications increased 35%
- Total funds requested increased 75%

Research and Technology Partnerships

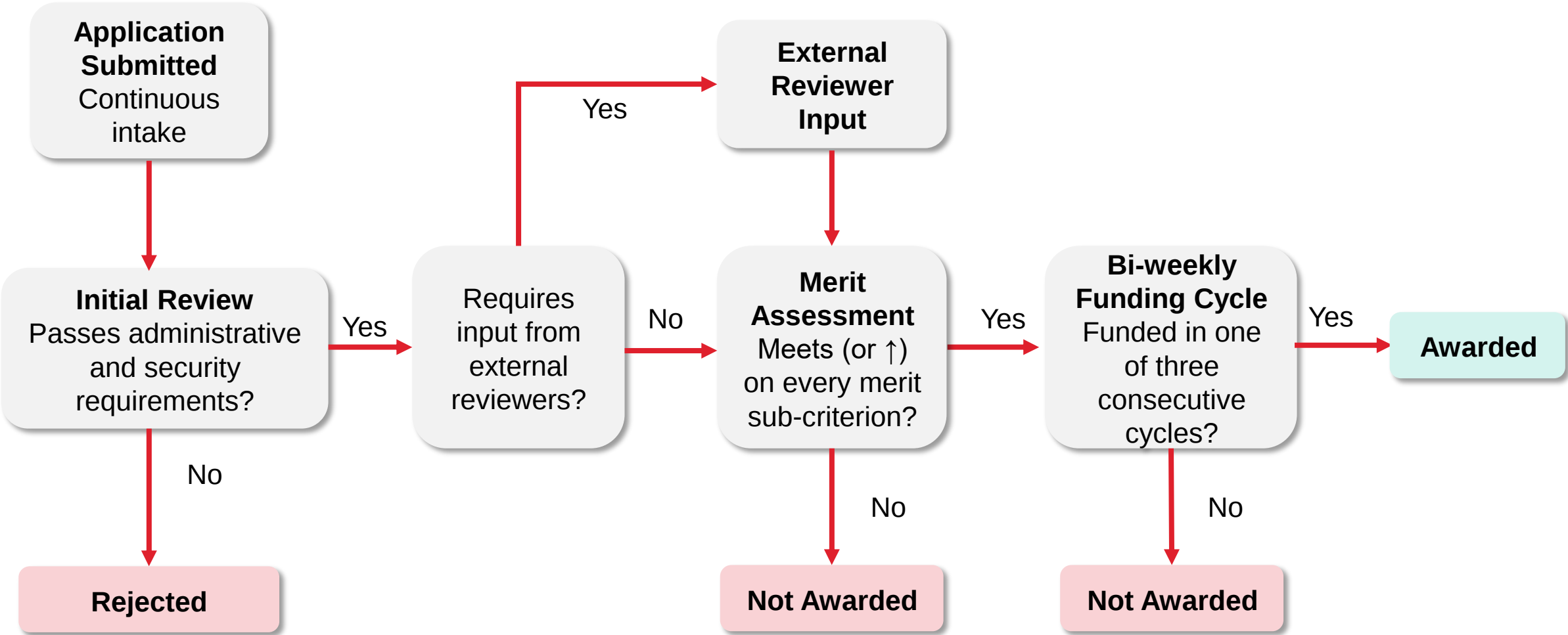
Background

- Alliance was designed on merit scoring to enable competition for funds
- Balancing increased demand with commitment to support continuous intake model has led to changes in administration of Alliance Advantage:
 - Employing a competitive funding model (October 2024)
 - Pausing extension with funds (February 2025)
 - Increasing threshold for next installment from 50% of funds spent to 65% (August 2025)

2. Merit evaluation and competitive selection process



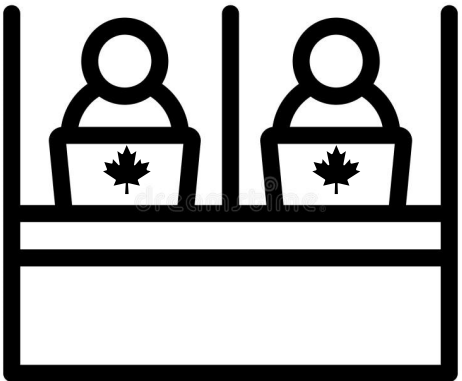
Merit Evaluation and Funding Competition Overview



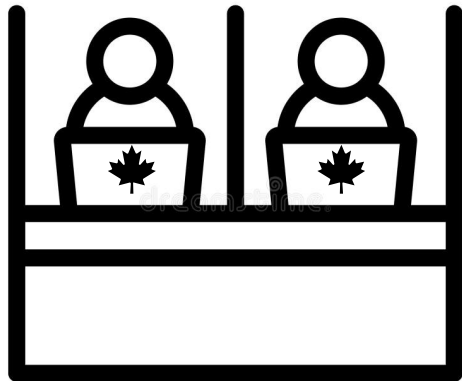
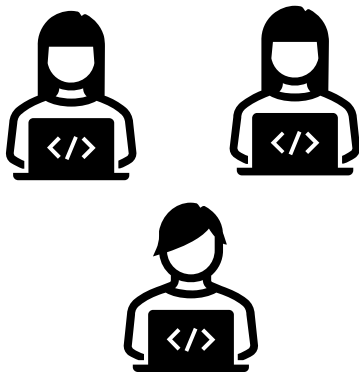
Project Size and Merit Assessment Mechanisms

Small project	Medium project	Large project
Annual request of at least \$20,000 up to an average annual request of \$75,000 for 1 to 5 years	Average annual request of more than \$75,000 up to \$300,000 for 1 to 5 years	Average annual request of more than \$300,000 up to a maximum annual request of \$1,000,000 for 1 to 5 years
Merit assessment mechanisms		
NSERC file managers (Max application size is 7 pages) Evaluation supported by existing NSERC peer review (the applicant and each co-applicant – except co-applicants who are early career researchers – must hold an active peer-reviewed grant from NSERC as primary applicant at the time of application) External reviewers (Max application size is 11 pages) If there is no existing NSERC peer review for the applicant or one of the co-applicants (except co-applicants who are early career researchers), external reviewers with expertise directly related to the proposal will be used	External reviewers With expertise directly related to the proposal Provide review based on the evaluation criteria (Max application size is 11 pages)	External reviewers With expertise directly related to the proposal Provide review based on the evaluation criteria (Max application size is 27 pages)

Staff Only Review (Internal)



External Reviewer Input



Alliance: Merit evaluation and funding decisions

Consistency and calibration

- NSERC file managers:
 - Receive extensive training and participate in regular calibration exercises, and
 - Leverage comprehensive calibration reference material
- Merit rating assignment:
 - Based on input from a minimum of two NSERC file managers, and
 - Verified by senior management and/or internal committee



Alliance Grants Merit Indicators

Sub-Criterion	Merit Rating	Merit Score
1.1	Exceeds	2
1.2	Exceeds	2
2.1	Meets	3
2.2	Meets	3
3.1	Exceptional	1
3.2	Exceptional	1
4.1	Exceeds	2
4.2	Meets	3
Application Overall Merit Score (Average)		2.13

N.B. If any sub-criterion is rated *Does Not Satisfy* (DNS), the application cannot be considered for funding.

Alliance: Merit evaluation and funding decisions

How competitive funding works

- Competition rounds are held every two weeks, and the annual budget is divided equally across all 26 rounds.
- Applications are ranked by overall merit score.
- Funding starts from the top of the ranked list and proceeds until that round's budget is depleted.
- Applications not selected will automatically be considered for funding in up to two additional competition rounds.

Alliance: Merit evaluation and funding decisions

Merit assessment mechanisms and the competitive process

- During each competition round, applications are grouped by merit assessment mechanism (with or without external reviewer input).
- The bi-weekly funding is divided between the two groups in proportion to the total amount requested by each group.
- NSERC aims to maintain comparable success rates between the two groups.

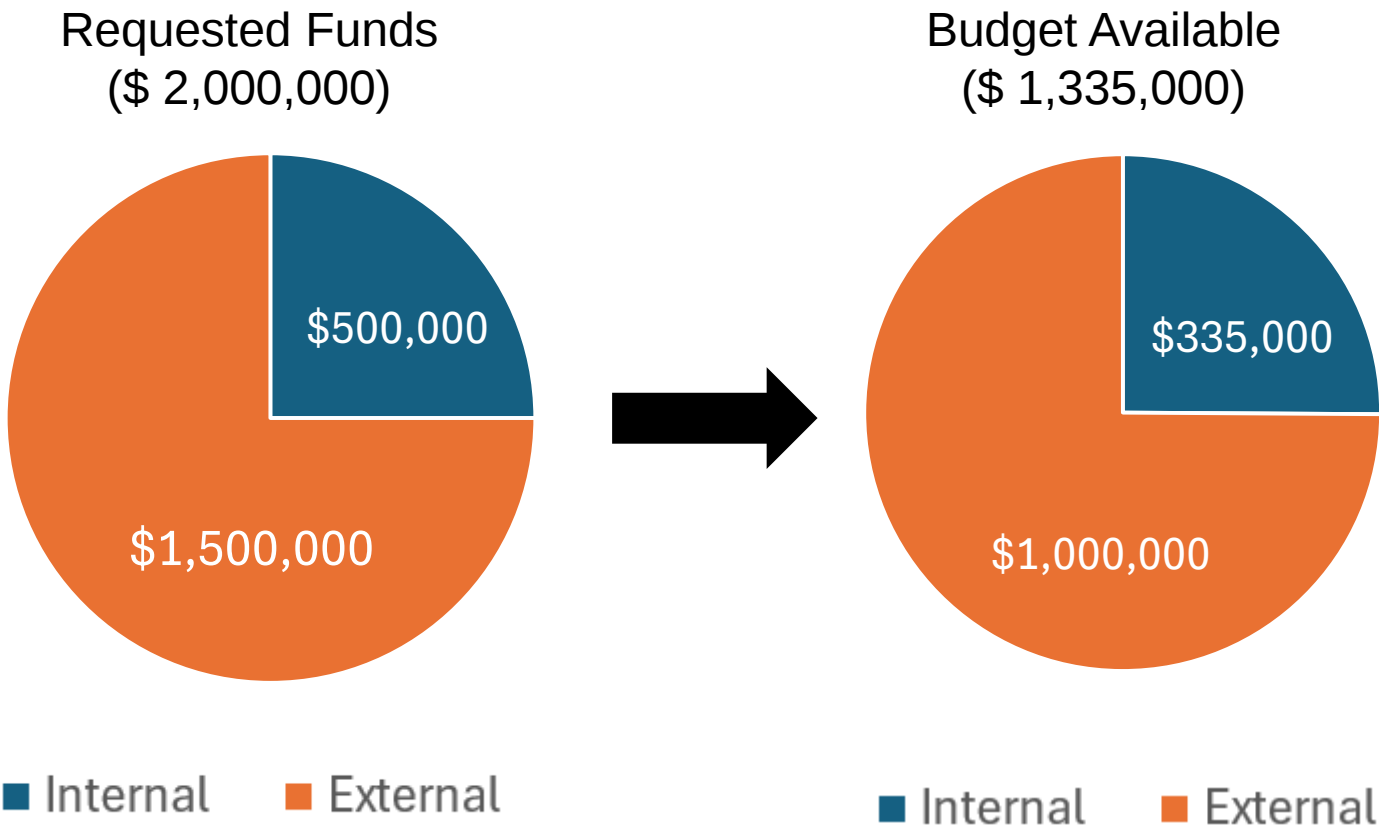
External
Input

App ID	Request
App 1	\$ 300,000
App 3	\$ 250,000
App 4	\$ 650,000
App 7	\$ 150,000
App 10	\$ 150,000
Total	\$ 1,500,000

Internally
Reviewed

App ID	Request
App 2	\$ 45,000
App 5	\$ 70,000
App 6	\$ 40,000
App 8	\$ 60,000
App 9	\$ 75,000
App 11	\$ 65,000
App 12	\$ 50,000
App 13	\$ 60,000
App 14	\$ 35,000
Total	\$ 500,000

Fund Allocation



Funds are allocated to internally and externally reviewed applications in proportion to the total amount requested from each pool

Cycle 1

Funding Available: \$1,000,000

App ID	Merit Score	Request (\$)	Cumulative Total (\$)
App A	1.52	100,000	100,000
App B	1.83	250,000	350,000
App C	2.11	500,000	850,000
App D	2.42	100,000	950,000
App E	2.42	150,000	1,100,000
App F	2.42	200,000	1,300,000
App G	2.51	500,000	1,800,000
App H	2.67	100,000	1,900,000
App I	2.85	80,000	1,980,000
App J	2.93	100,000	2,080,000

Unallocated Funding: \$150,000
(carried over)

Cycle 2

Funding Available: \$1,150,000

App ID	Merit Score	Request (\$)	Cumulative Total (\$)
App K	1.42	200,000	200,000
App L	1.93	150,000	350,000
App M	2.26	300,000	650,000
App D	2.42	100,000	750,000
App E	2.42	150,000	900,000
App F	2.42	200,000	1,100,000
App G	2.51	500,000	1,600,000
App H	2.67	100,000	1,700,000
App N	2.69	100,000	1,800,000
App I	2.85	80,000	1,880,000
App J	2.93	100,000	1,980,000
App O	2.98	400,000	2,380,000

Unallocated Funding: \$50,000
(carried over)

Cycle 3

Funding Available: \$1,050,000

App ID	Merit Score	Request (\$)	Cumulative Total (\$)
App P	1.27	150,000	150,000
App Q	1.74	300,000	450,000
App G	2.51	500,000	950,000
App H	2.67	100,000	1,050,000
App N	2.69	100,000	1,150,000
App R	2.74	500,000	1,650,000
App S	2.78	100,000	1,750,000
App T	2.82	100,000	1,850,000
App I	2.85	80,000	1,930,000
App J	2.93	100,000	2,030,000
App O	2.98	400,000	2,430,000
App U	2.98	100,000	2,530,000

Unallocated Funding: \$0
(no carry over)

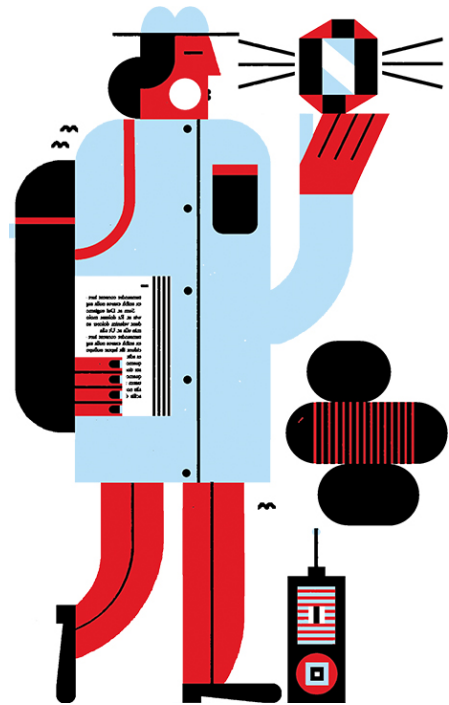
Alliance: Merit evaluation and funding decisions

Timelines

After the first competition round you will receive:

- The results of your application's merit evaluation (RoME) and
- Reviewer comments (if applicable) and
- A letter informing you that your application:
 - was selected for funding **or**
 - that your application will remain in consideration for up to two additional competition rounds; you will receive a final funding decision within approximately four weeks of the letter.

2. Success rates and competition results



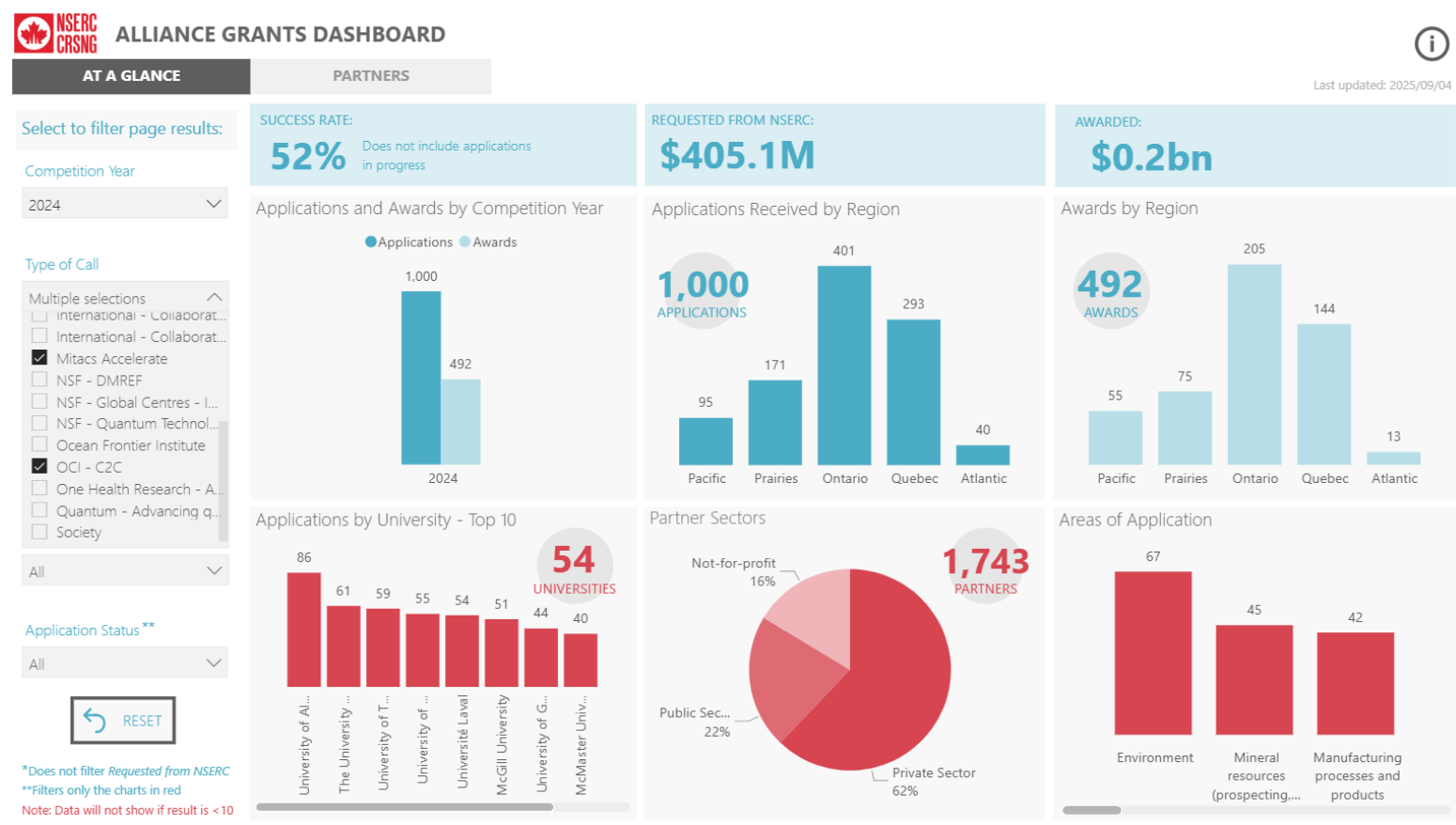
Alliance: Merit evaluation and funding decisions

Merit scores needed for funding

- There is **no minimum score** that ensures an application will be funded.
- Factors that determine the minimum overall merit score required for funding will **vary** with each competition round and its unique pool of applications.
- To buffer against short-term fluctuations applications remain in consideration for **up to three** competition rounds.

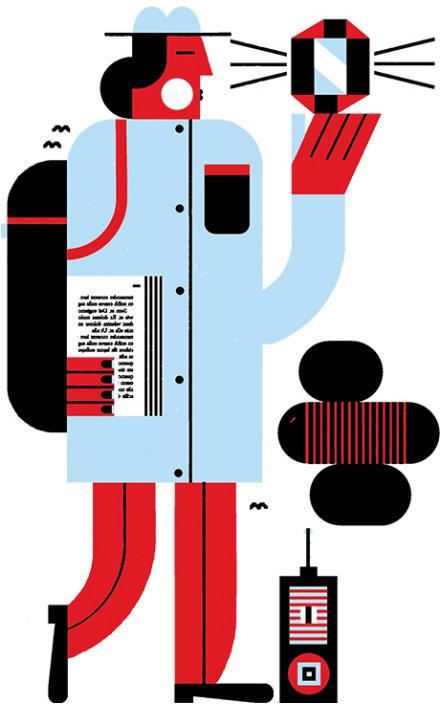
Alliance: Merit evaluation and funding decisions

Current success rates



Alliance Grants Dashboard

3. Revisions and resubmissions



Alliance: Merit evaluation and funding decisions

Revisions and resubmissions

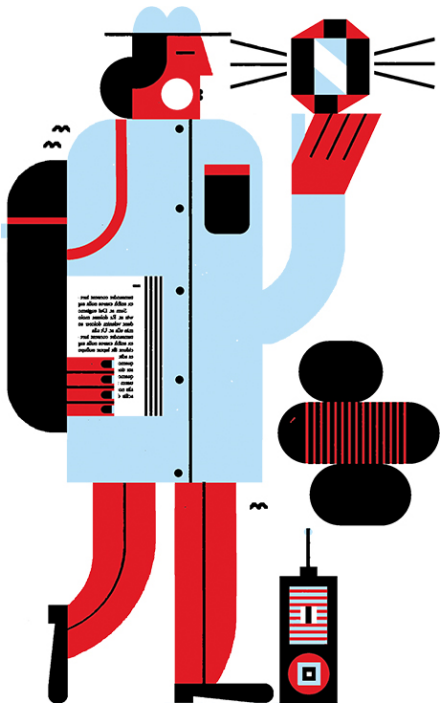
- Applications can **not** be revised between competition funding rounds.
- Unsuccessful applications may be revised and resubmitted as new applications.
 - **Must** be accompanied by a cover letter outlining the changes that have been made.
 - Will go through the **entire** review process again, including input from new external reviewers, where applicable.

Alliance: Merit evaluation and funding decisions

Understanding NSERC's funding decision

- If your application is unsuccessful:
 - Review the merit indicators
 - Review the comments from external reviewers (if applicable)
 - Reach out to the file manager named in your decision letter if you still have questions
- An appeal **must** be based on a compelling demonstration of a procedural error in the review of your application.

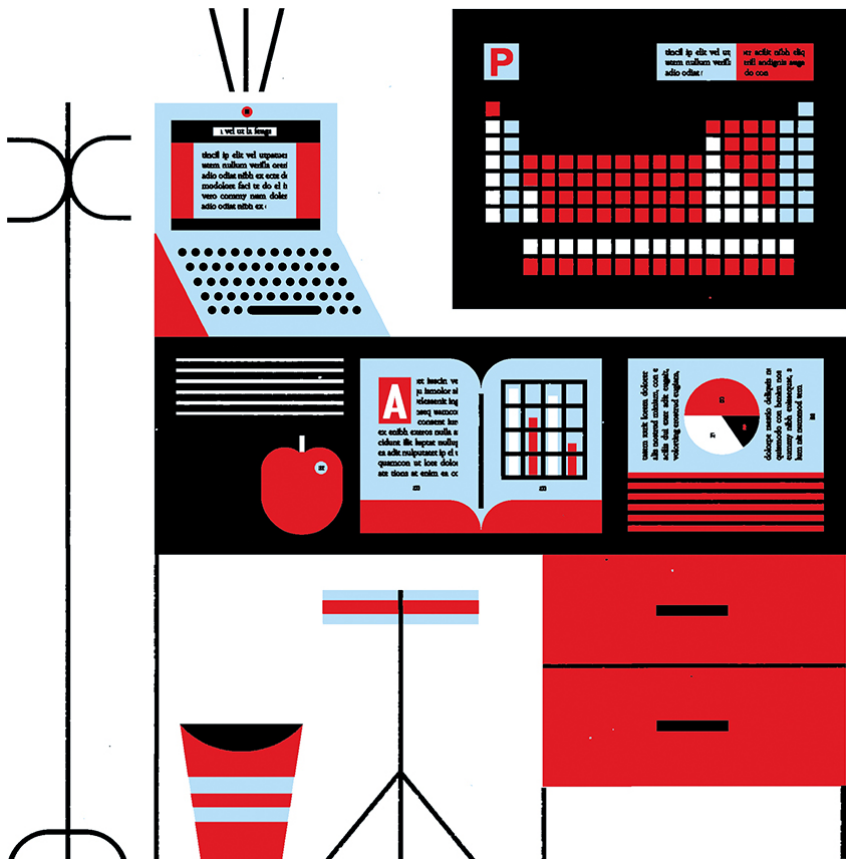
4. Funding Considerations



Alliance: Merit evaluation and funding decisions

How are award amounts determined?

- NSERC **does not** reduce Alliance grant award amounts to fund more applications.
 - To ensure that funded projects have the needed resources for success, funds are awarded based on the **eligible expenses** in your proposed budget.
- If you encounter spending delays or a reduced need for funds, **please notify NSERC** and include it in your **progress report**.



Questions?

Contact us:

alliance@nserc-crsng.gc.ca

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