**Call for Proposals for Research Grants - 2023**

The Alberta Land Institute (ALI) announces a Call for Proposals for its research grants competition. The deadline for receipt of applications is **December 1, 2023**. We expect that successful applicants will be notified by January 30, 2024.

**About Alberta Land Institute**

The [Alberta Land Institute](https://www.albertalandinstitute.ca/) is an independent research institute based at the University of Alberta. We are committed to research that supports and enhances land use policy in the province of Alberta and beyond. Sound policy development should be informed by a thorough consideration of costs and benefits – economic, social and environmental. ALI’s work focuses on the changing landscape and the ways that planning and policy design can ensure the long-term sustainability of Alberta’s agricultural sector, its water and its natural areas. Current and completed research projects conducted or supported by ALI can be viewed online at <https://www.albertalandinstitute.ca/research/research-projects>.

**Research Categories**

The Alberta Land Institute funds and conducts research in the following three categories:

| **Discovery Research** | Research undertaken to identify and examine emerging and future issues critical to the Institute’s mandate. Successful proposals in this category will articulate broad research questions, inform long-range policy development using different disciplines and theoretical perspectives, and offer or inspire new information or innovative solutions to land use and land use management problems.  |
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| **Policy Research** | Projects focusing on a specific issue of immediate and critical concern to ALI’s stakeholders, providing concrete analysis of policy alternatives, land use instruments, etc., and supported by comprehensive academic research. The primary purpose of projects in this category is to fill knowledge gaps and support decision making in Alberta. |
| **Educational Projects** | Projects aimed at translating and transmitting existing or new ALI or other relevant knowledge beyond the academic community in order to shed light on issues specifically relevant to ALI’s partners and stakeholders and to support public discussion and policymaking in Alberta. |

**Selection Process**

Applications will be pre-screened by ALI staff and assessed by ALI Director and external reviewers. The Director will make the final decision on the awards.

**Requirements**

Applicants must submit ALI’s completed application form. Please review the application guidelines carefully before completing the application form. Along with this, applicants must submit a Tri-Agencies personal data form for themselves and for each co-investigator. Applicants must submit **one PDF file** containing all required information and documentation on or before the deadline to: albertalandinstitute@ualberta.ca

* A Final Report describing the research methodology, findings, and conclusions, as well as (and in a substantive manner) the policy issue that the research addresses and the implications of the report for policy and/or practice. The Research Director may set out other reporting requirements.
* A short (2–4 pages), non-technical summary of the Final Report.

Subsequent applications will only be considered if satisfactory final or interim progress reports of all previous and existing ALI grants have been fulfilled prior to the new application.

Any published work that is derivative of the research supported by the grant must acknowledge the financial support received from the Institute. ALI must be provided with a copy of any publications.

Please refer to the [**Grant Guidelines**](https://www.albertalandinstitute.ca/public/download/documents/235587)and [**Application**](https://www.albertalandinstitute.ca/public/download/documents/235585) for further information on the application process.

**Project Period and Budget**

Projects may be considered up to a three year period - funded to a maximum of $50,000 per year.

Funding for each year is dependent on deliverables, the potential policy implications and the proposed approach.

**Contact**

Inquiries regarding the nature of the project can be made by email to sagrawal@ualberta.ca. All other inquiries may be addressed to: albertalandinstitute@ualberta.ca. Please clearly indicate the nature of your email in the subject line. Additional information about the ALI and the Call for Proposals is available [here.](https://www.albertalandinstitute.ca/news/post/call-for-proposals-for-research-grants-2023)

**RESEARCH AREAS – FALL 2023**

The Alberta Land Institute is accepting for consideration research proposals in the following three research areas: 1) Water Licensing, 2) Alberta Carbon Sink Potential, and 3) Sustainable Agriculture: Amidst the Changing Climate. Proposals must fit one of the three Research Categories within ALI’s research portfolio: *Discovery Research, Policy Research, or Educational* *Projects*. ALI is particularly interested in research that relates to and informs the public policy process.

The Alberta Land Institute is also accepting for consideration research proposals in the **Open** category. Proposals must fit one of the three Research Categories: *Discovery Research, Policy Research, or Educational Projects*, and must engage directly in another current area of study within the Institute’s mandate.

1. **Water Licensing**

**Background**

All of the water in Alberta is owned by the Crown and managed by the Province. Under its Water Act, the Province requires an individual, municipality, or business to obtain a water license to use any ground or surface water. Among the exceptions are statutory household use and traditional agriculture use. The law prioritizes older licenses over newer license holders. It also allows the transfer of licenses with approval from the provincial government.

This system of licensing usually works well when there is enough water to go around. However, in times of water scarcity, it can become controversial. For instance, in 2006, the South Saskatchewan River Basin became the first watershed to be closed to new water license applications. This moratorium on the issuing of new water licenses created Canada’s first market-based system to transfer or trade water licenses. One of the several implications of this is that municipalities and counties that reach the limit of their existing licenses because of population growth will have to cap growth. Or, they will have to trade or exchange licenses at market price. It is still unclear at this point if this will effectively manage growth so that it is contiguous and sustainable to service, or whether growth will simply be pushed elsewhere. With climate change, the water availability across the province in other major river basins in Alberta could change for the worse, particularly, with the higher projected population of the province.

**Research Questions**

Under this theme, ALI is interested in several questions including the following few:

1. Is water licensing the best policy tool available for water management? What are the other tools available?
2. How does the regulation of water affect growth? How might it affect the rest of Alberta in the future when droughts, floods, and other abnormal water activities become more common?
3. Can water be used as a regional growth management tool in Alberta? If so, how?
4. **Alberta Carbon Sink Potential**

**Background**

Canada and Alberta have committed to a goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. Achieving this ambitious goal will require a wide range of technical and policy tools. While the reduction of anthropogenic emissions is critical, the sequestration of carbon in soil and biomass will also be an essential part of the exercise. Biological carbon sinks have the advantage that they sequester carbon from diffuse sources.

The Government of Alberta has recently indicated an interest in understanding the carbon sink capacity of the province’s “forest, fescue, soil etc.” It has been estimated that Alberta’s landscapes maintain a biological carbon store of 39 – 43 billion tCO2e, though this amount declines annually.

**Research Questions**

ALI is seeking proposals for research to assess the carbon sink capacities of Alberta’s diverse landscapes and ecosystems. These might include forests, grasslands, wetlands, and crop and grazing lands.

Some questions of interest include:

1. What is the accuracy of current methods of assessing carbon sink capacity and how might it be improved?
2. What is the current amount of carbon currently sequestered in Alberta’s different landscapes?
3. What management actions enhance or detract from the carbon sink capacity of landscapes?
4. To what extent are land management actions aimed at carbon sequestration complementary to, or in conflict with, other policy or management objectives, including other environmental objectives.
5. What is the cost and benefits of various management actions?

ALI is particularly interested in research that relates to and informs the public policy process.

1. **Sustainable Agriculture: Amidst the changing climate**

**Background**

Agriculture plays a vital role in Alberta’s economy. In 2021, Alberta generated the highest farm operation revenues in Canada. However, the expected rise in demand for affordable food, driven by population growth, extreme weather events, and uncertain global food prices, could significantly influence agricultural production. To bolster provincial food security and mitigate environmental impacts, the agriculture sector will have to find innovative and sustainable solutions. This requires further research and experimentation as well as new policies and regulations.

**Research Questions**

Examples of the questions that interest ALI under this theme are:

1. Sustainable farming practices: application, adaptation and challenges

* Do existing farm practices in Alberta have the ability to manage climate risks adequately, or are there other, new innovative technologies that could be adopted?
* What challenges are local farmers facing while trying to achieve an optimal yield on their lands, particularly with sustainable management practices? What innovative approaches can farmers employ to improve land use efficiencies?

2. Planning, Policy and Regulation

* Is current long-term planning and decision-making enough to achieve sustainable agriculture, or is there a need to improve the planning, particularly for fertilizer and other chemical application management, in achieving sustainability?
* Are there enough policies and regulations to ensure local food security and encourage communities to consume local food? What area needs more policy developments?
* Are there enough policies and regulations available for farmers to evolve and secure local farming while facing climate-related challenges?

**Open** **Category**

The Alberta Land Institute is also accepting for consideration research proposals in the Open category. Proposals must fit one of the three Research Categories within ALI’s research portfolio: *Discovery Research, Policy Research, or Educational Projects*, and must engage directly in other current areas of study within the Institute’s mandate:

1. Land Use, Resilience, Environmental Risk – The Institute is seeking proposals for research that can assist decision-makers to minimize and mitigate environmental risk and promote more resilient settlement and land use policy in Alberta. ALI is particularly interested in a better understanding of: the environmental risks, their patterns in Alberta, and the potential responses to such risks; the regulatory framework and the policy and economic incentives which affect public and private land use decisions; and the dissemination of relevant information within government and to the public.
2. Ecosystem Service Markets – The Institute will consider research proposals focusing on ecosystem service markets and market-based instruments for conservation.
3. Housing and Immigration – The Institute will consider research proposals focusing on housing and immigration. The Canadian government is bringing immigrants at a record number. The key driver behind it is to ease labour shortages in the country and stabilize the country's aging population. At the same time, Canadians are feeling the pinch of housing affordability. ALI is interested in how immigration may be impacting the housing crisis in Canada.