

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
Option 2 Webinar for Researchers – NSERC
May 2023

Option 2 application process:

- **Is it possible to consult NSERC to validate if a project qualifies for Option 2?**
NSERC cannot formally review proposals before they are submitted, but you are free to contact us, and we will answer your questions.
- **Is there a deadline to apply for an Alliance Option 2 grant?**
There is no deadline – applications can be submitted at any time.
- **Can an applicant submit two Alliance Option 2 proposals simultaneously?**
There is no limit to the number of proposals you can submit, nor restrictions on deadline for submission.

Option 2 research subject:

- **Are projects focusing on helping the Canadian government meet its objectives eligible for Option 2 (e.g., 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goal)?**

Yes, if the project also focuses on the Alliance Option 2 characteristics aiming at developing a solution to a well identified societal need in Canada.

Societal benefits:

- **Can one of the societal groups that benefit from a specific Alliance Option 2 project be located outside of Canada?**

Impacts can be broad and can include groups situated outside of Canada who have similar issues. However, Alliance Option 2 projects are expected to primarily target issues that affect societal groups in Canada and lead to positive outcomes and benefits to them.

- **Societal impact (e.g., change in policy, practice, and process) may take longer than the grant to realize. Is there an expectation that societal impact be demonstrated within the timeline of an Alliance Option 2 grant?**

NSERC accepts that there are cases where solutions will take longer to be implemented. Therefore, an Alliance Option 2 project may initiate the work and lead to generating key knowledge and technology that will pave a way towards a future solution and attract other players and investments to pursue the research and the mobilization of the results. This can be envisioned, if the goal of solving a problem that affects societal groups is well defined, according to the characteristics of Alliance Option 2.

Applicants & eligibility:

- **Does Alliance Option 2 also include the designation of co-PI for researchers? Can this designation also be extended to scholars from the social sciences or humanities who are working on the project?**

Alliance Option 2 projects can include co-applicants who are eligible to apply and hold a grant. Although the focus must be on activities that are within the natural sciences and engineering domain (NSE), Alliance allows for up to 30% of the budget to be spent on activities that are outside of the NSE when these activities are necessary to support and guide the NSE work.

- **Is it possible to include researchers from international universities to an Alliance Option 2 application?**

You may designate them as collaborators, but not as co-applicants, if they are from a foreign university. They will bring an intellectual contribution to the project; however, they will not have access to any funds.

- **Can a master's student apply for an Alliance Option 2 grant?**

An Alliance Option 2 application must be submitted by a faculty member who is eligible to receive an NSERC grant. Any undergraduate, graduate, or postdoctoral student can participate to the project, but not under the applicant or co-applicant designations.

Partnerships:

- **What is the best partnership scenario for Alliance Option 2?**

Alliance Option 2 projects can build partnerships with public, private, and not-for-profit organizations, but there is no obligation to include all three types. Each project is unique in its objectives, approach to research, societal perspectives, etc. Therefore, there is no one single formula to build your partnership. The composition of the partnership will be driven by the scope of the proposal, the nature of the societal need you are willing to work on fulfilling and the societal knowledge to define it and what the solution should be, and the need for technical and scientific expertise, to meet the goals and to efficiently mobilize the results to realize the expected societal benefits.

- **Is it mandatory for industrial partners and/or collaborators to be Canadian?**

Since Alliance Option 2 supports projects to resolve a societal issue in Canada, it is likely that the partners or collaborators will be Canadian. However, it is possible to tap in on the expertise of foreign participants if this helps reach the goals of the project.

- **Is NSERC expecting applications to include one researcher and partner(s), or are applicants expected to form a larger consortium with industrial partners and other groups?**

The expectation for Alliance Option 2 projects is that the applicant will reach out to societal groups or organizations representing societal groups affected by the issue in addition to the formal partners providing their expertise to conduct the research.

- **Can applicants from different universities work together to submit a proposal?**

NSERC welcomes proposals involving multiple universities, but one will have to be identified as the host institution.

- **Can universities outside of Canada be included in an Alliance Option 2 project?**

Researchers from foreign universities are welcome to participate as collaborators to enhance the scope of the research with their expertise and knowledge of issues that affect society globally. However, they will not have access to the funds.

- **Do partners need to contribute cash towards the project?**

There is no need for cash contributions in Alliance Option 2, although the project needs to include at least one partner who would have been eligible for cost-sharing had it been required. NSERC will provide 100% of the contributions, and partner organizations can decide to contribute cash even if it is not mandatory.

Evaluation:

- **Will the proposal be reviewed by external reviewers as well?**

If your application is successful at the PIVP selection committee stage, it will then be sent for external peer review, similarly to Alliance Option 1 proposals.

Success rate:

- **What is the success rate for Alliance Option 2 proposals?**

To date, approximately 50% of applications that are presented to the PIVP selection committee are successful and pursue in the evaluation process, and 80% of these are funded after peer review.

- **Can an Alliance Option 1 proposal be reworded and resubmitted as an Alliance Option 2 proposal?**

You may resubmit a proposal that has been reworked for Alliance Option 2. However, you must ensure that the goals of your project meet the characteristics and objectives of Alliance Option 2.