



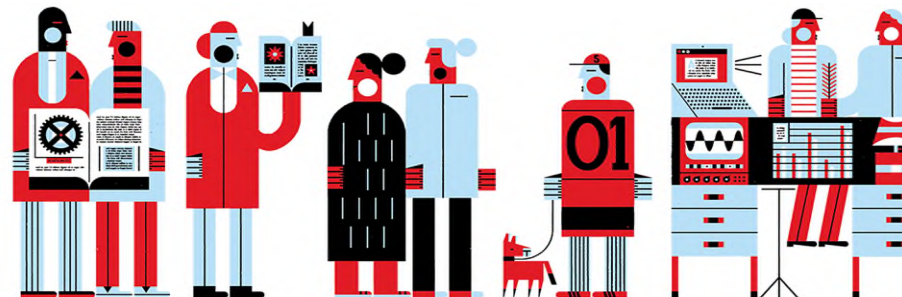
Recent changes to Alliance grants

Natural Science and Engineering Research Council

January 2024

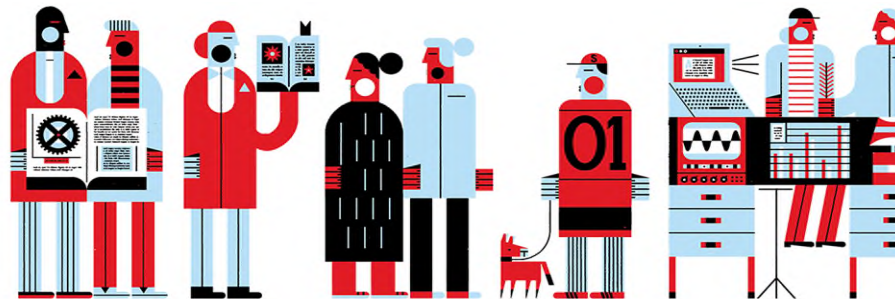
Background

- Alliance launched in 2019
- Continued development integral to sound program management
- Many aspects of the R&D landscape have changed (e.g., priorities, physical work environment)
- Recent modified program evaluation identified areas for improvement
- Constructive feedback from research community and NSERC staff
 - 1300 survey responses
 - 25 institutions consulted
 - Staff “hackathon”

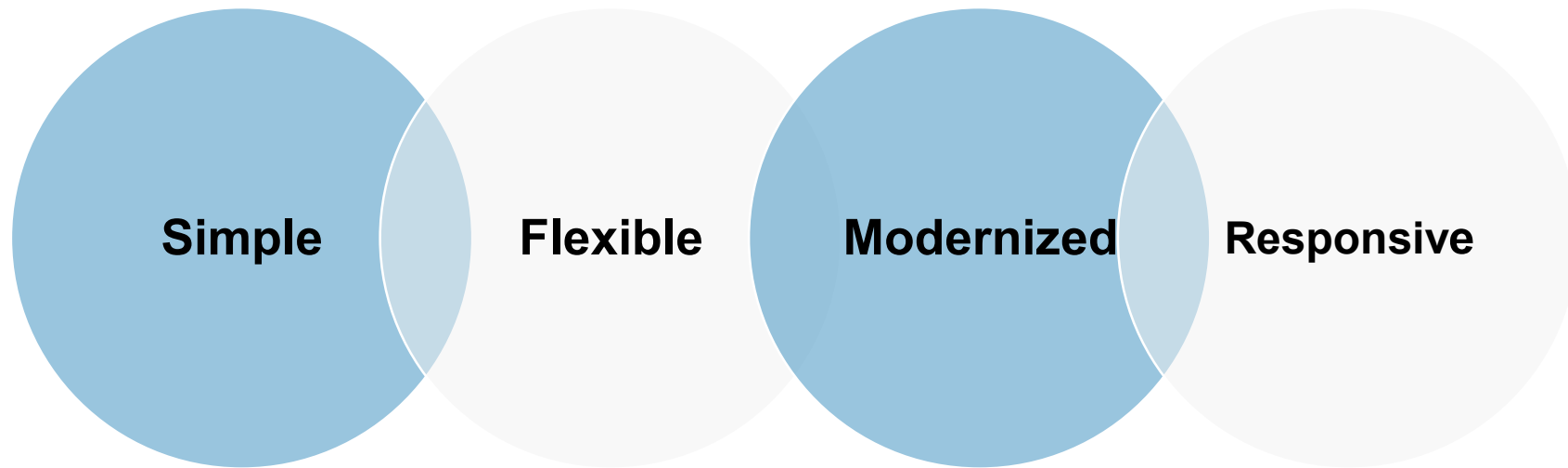


Areas for Improvement

- Confusing and prohibitive cost sharing options
- Some potential partners still not recognized for cost sharing
- Lack of flexibility and communication from NSERC
- High level of time and effort required
- Long time to decision



Implementing strategic improvements to Alliance



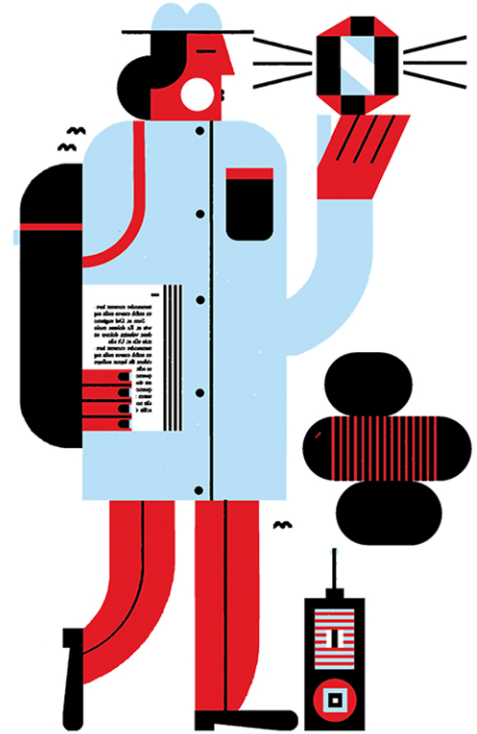
Strategic Improvements to Alliance

- Removing barriers to collaboration
- Championing more research partnerships
- Providing efficient and responsive proposal assessment
- Strengthening relationships with the research community
- Ensuring inclusive research support

Flexible Treatment of Rejections	January 2023
Single Funding Ratio (2:1 leverage)	June 2023
Extension with Funds	August 2023
ECR* Voucher Merit Criteria Partner organizations COI clarification SAT limit increase Rebranding	December 2023
In person and virtual outreach to institutions	Winter & Spring 2024

*Early career researcher

1. Removing barriers to collaboration



Removing barriers to collaboration

Rebranding and Repositioning Alliance

Projects focused on the partners' goals, with at least one partner sharing in the costs of research



Projects with societal impact as the main driver




Removing barriers to collaboration

Reorganize funding opportunities on the website

Innovate / Alliance /	
Alliance Advantage	Accepting applications
Alliance Society	Accepting applications
Alliance International	Accepting applications
Special calls and joint funding opportunities	▼

More to come!

Removing barriers to collaboration

 Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada Conseil de recherches en sciences naturelles et en génie du Canada

Application - Create a New Application

Select a program name using the 'List...' button

Program Name

Title of proposal

180 (180 chars)

Proposal type Letter of intent Full proposal

Type of call

Refer to NSERC's website for details require a letter of intent.

- Advantage
- Alberta Innovates - Advance
- Alberta Innovates - CASBE
- International - Catalyst
- International - Catalyst - Quantum
- International - Collaboration
- International - Collaboration - ANR - Quantum
- International - Collaboration - Quantum
- Mitacs Accelerate
- OCI - C2C
- Quantum - Advancing quantum sensing
- Research Manitoba - ACT
- Society

Removing barriers to collaboration

Simple and attractive funding ratio for Alliance Advantage



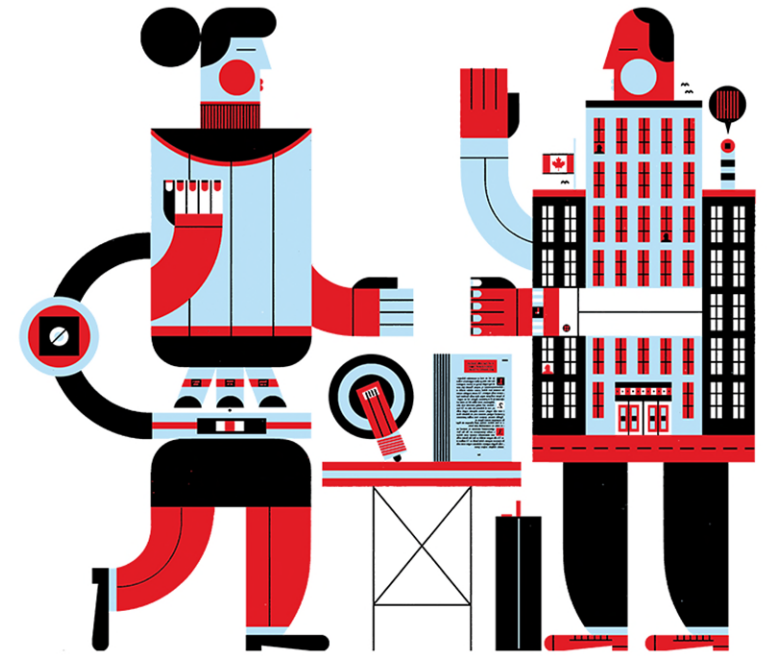
1:1 or 2:1
Depending on partner size,
sector or partnership combination



2:1

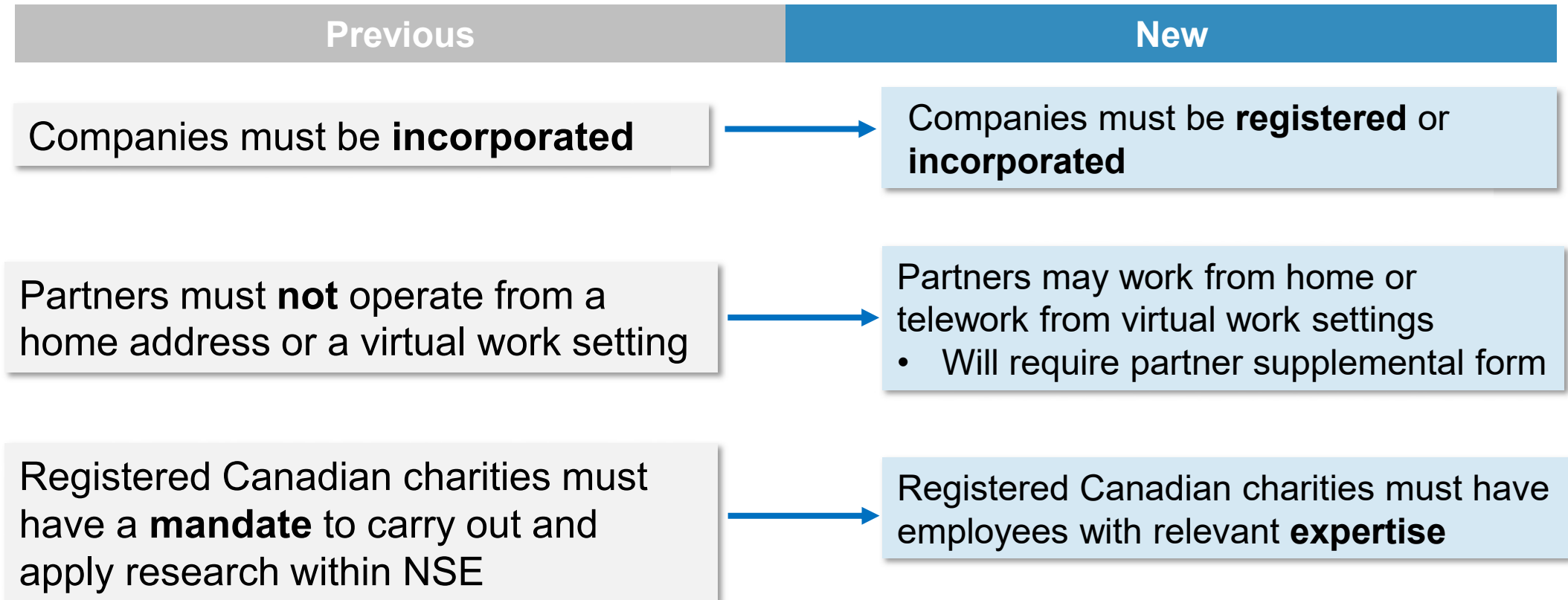
Not applicable to previously
awarded applications

2. Championing more research partnerships



Championing more research partnerships

Expanded consideration for cost-sharing



See [Partner page](#) for full list of requirements

Championing more research partnerships

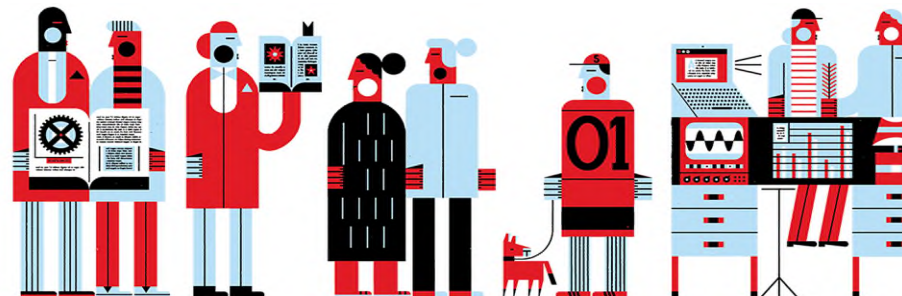
Reminder: Role of Partner Organizations

Each partner organization must do at least one of the following:

- play an active role in the project's research activities
- utilize the project's research results to help achieve its desired outcomes
- play an active role in translating or mobilizing knowledge to ensure that the research results have an impact



NEW: The training plan must include interactions between trainees and partner organizations

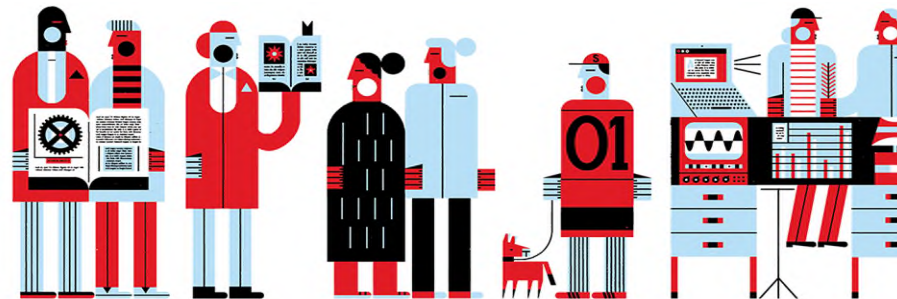


Championing more research partnerships

Partner organization supplemental information questionnaire



NEW: To assess whether a partner can be recognized for cost-sharing, a partner organization supplemental form will be required for every potential partner with fewer than five employees, with **every** new application



Championing more research partnerships

Producer groups and industrial associations

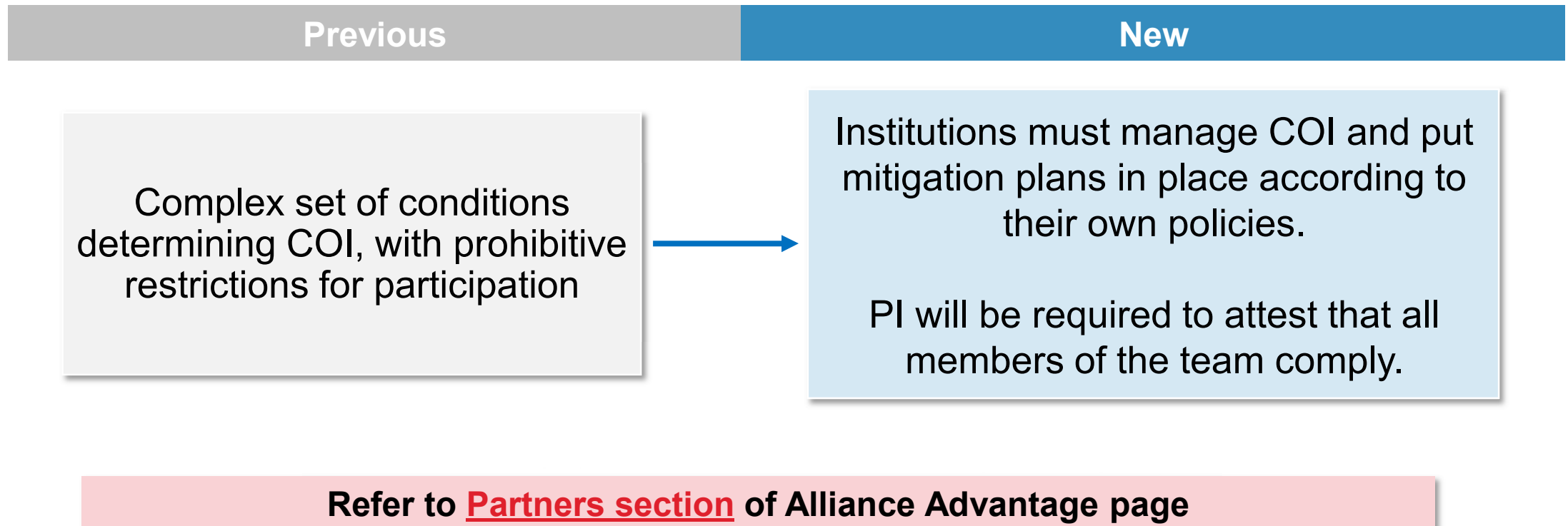
Role	Producer Groups	Industrial Associations
Coordinating & Funding Research	On behalf of their members and/or to mobilize knowledge to encourage the growth and sustainability of the industry	For the group or sector the organization represents
Collaboration	Through organization's board or committees or through one or more of the organization's members	Directly , or through one or more of the organization's members
In-kind Contributions	Project design, project oversight, meetings, participation of staff, board or committee members or member producers	Typically, by the association members with project management by the association
HQP Training	Through the producer group or its members	Through a member company or companies
Research Results	Disseminates information to all members; translates and mobilizes knowledge from the project to members	Demonstrates availability of resources to implement the results , either directly or through one or more of the organization's members

See [Partner page](#) for full list of requirements

Championing more research partnerships

Changes to Conflict of Interest (COI) guidelines

- To facilitate innovation and support entrepreneurship
- Increased opportunities for university spin-offs to be recognized for cost sharing



Changes to Conflict of Interest (COI) guidelines

NSERC
www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca

Contact Us Help

Save Preview Portfolio Instructions Logout

Partnership/Conflict of Interest >

Form	Form 101 - Partnership/Conflict of Interest
Application Profile	
Area(s) of Research	National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships
Certification/ Requirement	In accordance with the National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships , applications involving at least one partner organization from the private sector (including industrial associations and / or producer groups) are required to be submitted with a Risk Assessment Form.
Partnership/Conflict of Interest	Does this application include at least one partner organization from the private sector? <input type="button" value="v"/>
Cover Letter	
Co-Applicants	If you answered "Yes" to the above question, you must complete and attach the Risk Assessment Form .
Collaborators	For resources to assist in completing the Risk Assessment Form, please consult the array of Guidelines and Tools to Implement Research Security and Research Security Training Courses that are available on the Safeguarding Your Research portal.
Collaborator Biographical Sketches	
Summary of Proposal	Compliance with institutional conflict of interest policies
Proposal	All researchers and their institutions must adhere to the Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research (2021) . Adherence to the Framework includes appropriately identifying and addressing any real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest, in accordance with all participating institutions' policies on conflicts of interest in research.
Proposed Expenditures	Do you attest on behalf of you, your co-applicants and all other members of the research team that this collaboration complies with the conflict of interest policies of all participating institutions? <input type="button" value="v"/>
Budget Justification	
Contributions	I understand that this collaboration must comply with all participating institutions' conflict of interest policies for the duration of the grant. Should a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest arise, I will immediately disclose such conflict to my institution and to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada.
Justification for In-kind Contributions	
Other Documents	
Environmental Impact	
Risk Assessment Form	
Reviewers	
Reviewer Evaluation	

Integrated dedicated section for the Risk Assessment Form

The screenshot displays the NSERC application system interface. At the top, the NSERC logo and website URL (www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca) are visible. Below this is a navigation bar with links for 'Save', 'Preview', 'Portfolio', 'Instructions', and 'Logout'. The main content area is titled 'Partnership/Conflict of Interest >' and features a sidebar menu on the left with various application sections. The primary section is 'Form 101 - Partnership/Conflict of Interest', which includes 'National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships'. A key question is highlighted with a blue arrow: 'Does this application include at least one partner organization from the private sector?' followed by a dropdown menu. Below this, there is a section for 'Compliance with institutional conflict of interest policies' with another dropdown menu for the question: 'Do you attest on behalf of you, your co-applicants and all other members of the research team that this collaboration complies with the conflict of interest policies of all participating institutions?'.

Integrated dedicated section for the Risk Assessment Form

The screenshot displays the NSERC website interface. At the top, the NSERC logo and website URL (www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca) are visible. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links for 'Save', 'Preview', 'Portfolio', 'Instructions', and 'Logout'. A secondary navigation bar contains 'Contact Us' and 'Help'. The main content area is titled 'Form 101 - Risk Assessment Form'. It includes introductory text about the National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships and provides links to 'Guidelines and Tools to Implement Research Security' and 'Research Security Training Courses'. A section titled 'Your electronic file attachment must meet the following specifications:' lists requirements: PDF format, maximum file size of 3 Mb, and dimensions of 8 1/2" x 11" (216mm x 279mm). Below this, there is a 'Risk Assessment Form' section with a 'Type File' label, a 'Document description' text box (50 chars), a 'Filename' field with a 'Choose File' button and 'No file chosen' text, and a 'Status' label. An 'Attach' button is located at the bottom right of this section. On the left side, a vertical menu lists various application components, with 'Risk Assessment Form' highlighted in blue and indicated by a blue arrow pointing to it from the left.

NSERC
www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca

Contact Us Help

Save Preview Portfolio Instructions Logout

Risk Assessment Form >

Form

- Application Profile
- Area(s) of Research
- Certification/ Requirement
- Partnership/Conflict of Interest
- Cover Letter
- Co-Applicants
- Collaborators
- Collaborator Biographical Sketches
- Summary of Proposal
- Proposal
- Proposed Expenditures
- Budget Justification
- Contributions
- Justification for In-kind Contributions
- Other Documents
- Environmental Impact
- Risk Assessment Form**

Form 101 - Risk Assessment Form

In accordance with the [National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships](#), if your application includes at least one private sector partner organization, you must complete and attach the [Risk Assessment Form](#).

For resources to assist in completing the Risk Assessment Form, please consult the array of [Guidelines and Tools to Implement Research Security](#) and [Research Security Training Courses](#) that are available on the [Safeguarding Your Research](#) portal.

Select "Instructions" from the common menu bar for details concerning this electronic attachment. For detailed instructions on the attachment process and attachment presentation, consult the [Electronic Attachment Instructions](#).

Your electronic file attachment must meet the following specifications:

- PDF format
- Maximum file size is 3 Mb
- 8 1/2" x 11" (216mm x 279mm)

Risk Assessment Form

Type File

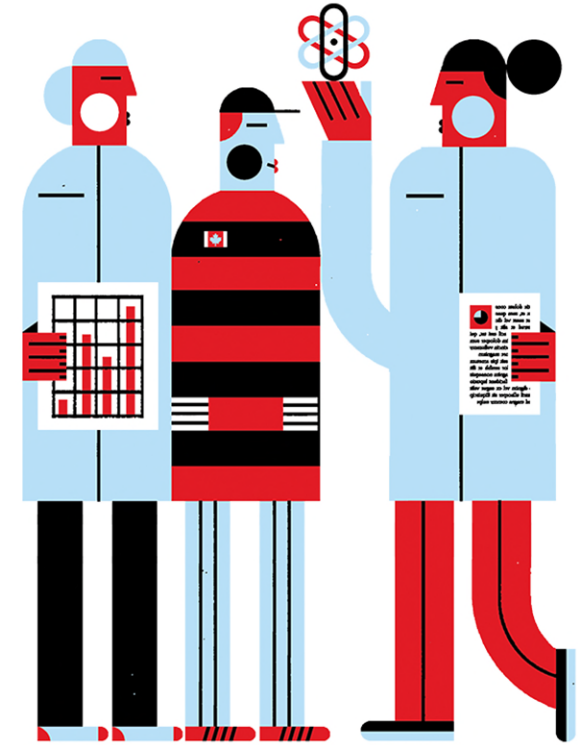
Document description (50 chars)

Filename No file chosen

Status



3. Providing efficient and responsive proposal assessment



Providing efficient and responsive proposal assessment

Streamlined merit sub-criteria



- Consolidated sub-criteria where appropriate
- Removed sub-criterion requiring “*identified indicators and methods for monitoring progress during the project and for assessing outcomes after the project*”

Proposal template

	Background
	Partnership
	Research Plan
	Team
	Training Plan
	Impacts & Benefits to Canada

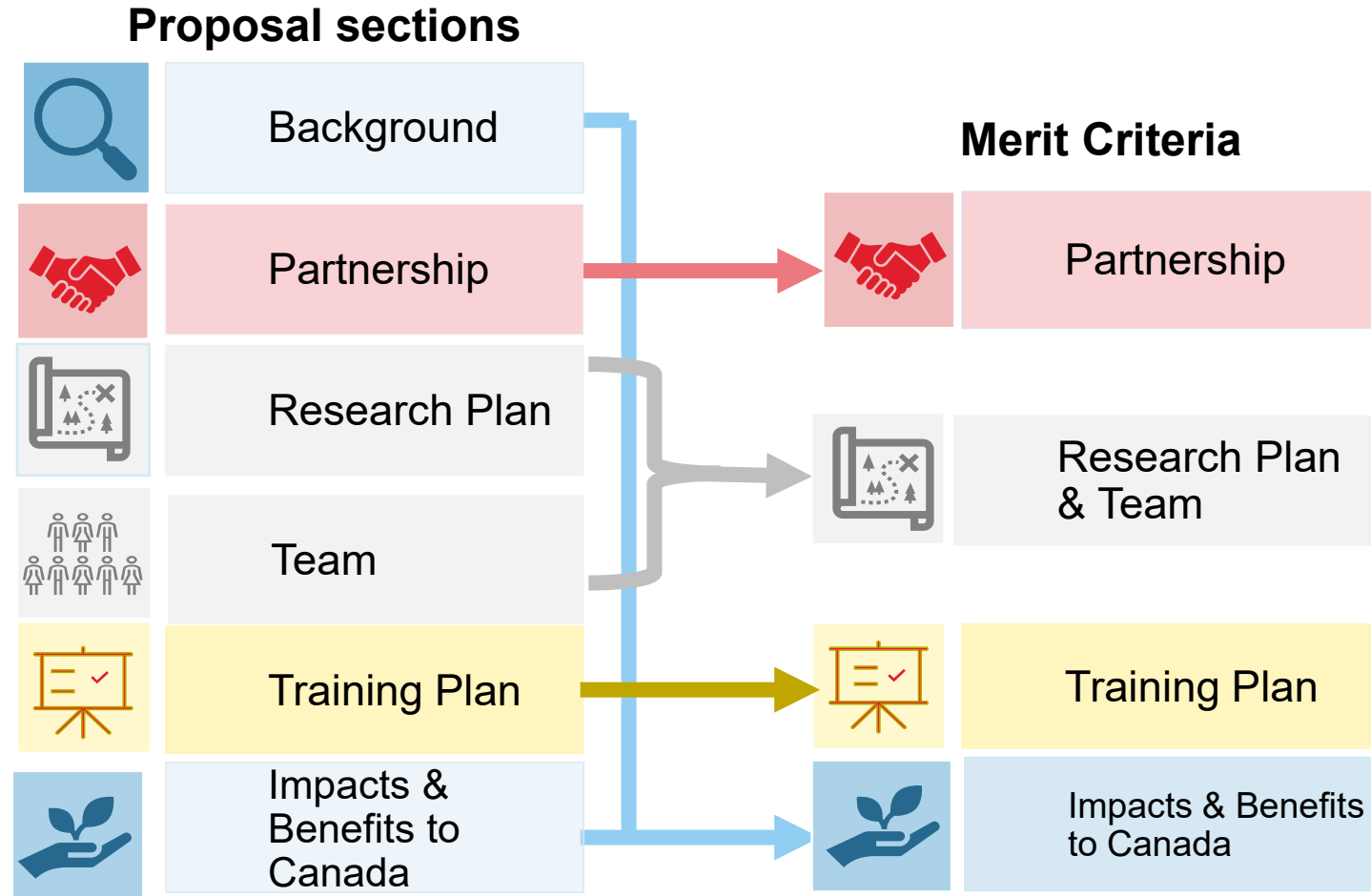
- Instructions improved
- Sections renamed and re-ordered



Better guidance, clarity and flow

Merit criteria

- Renamed and re-ordered (aligned with proposal sections)

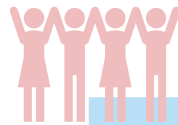


Changes to merit indicators

- Updated to align with new criteria
- Revised to improve clarity and differentiation
- Other notable changes:



Training: interaction between partner organization(s) and HQP is required for a “Meets” in Training



Team: revised to focus on team’s capacity, vs. just the applicant’s track record in training and managing similar projects



EDI: EDI sub-criteria revised to encourage more context specific and evidence-based EDI practices

New template transition period

FAQ: What if I had already downloaded the proposal template and started working on it before the new version was released Dec 5?

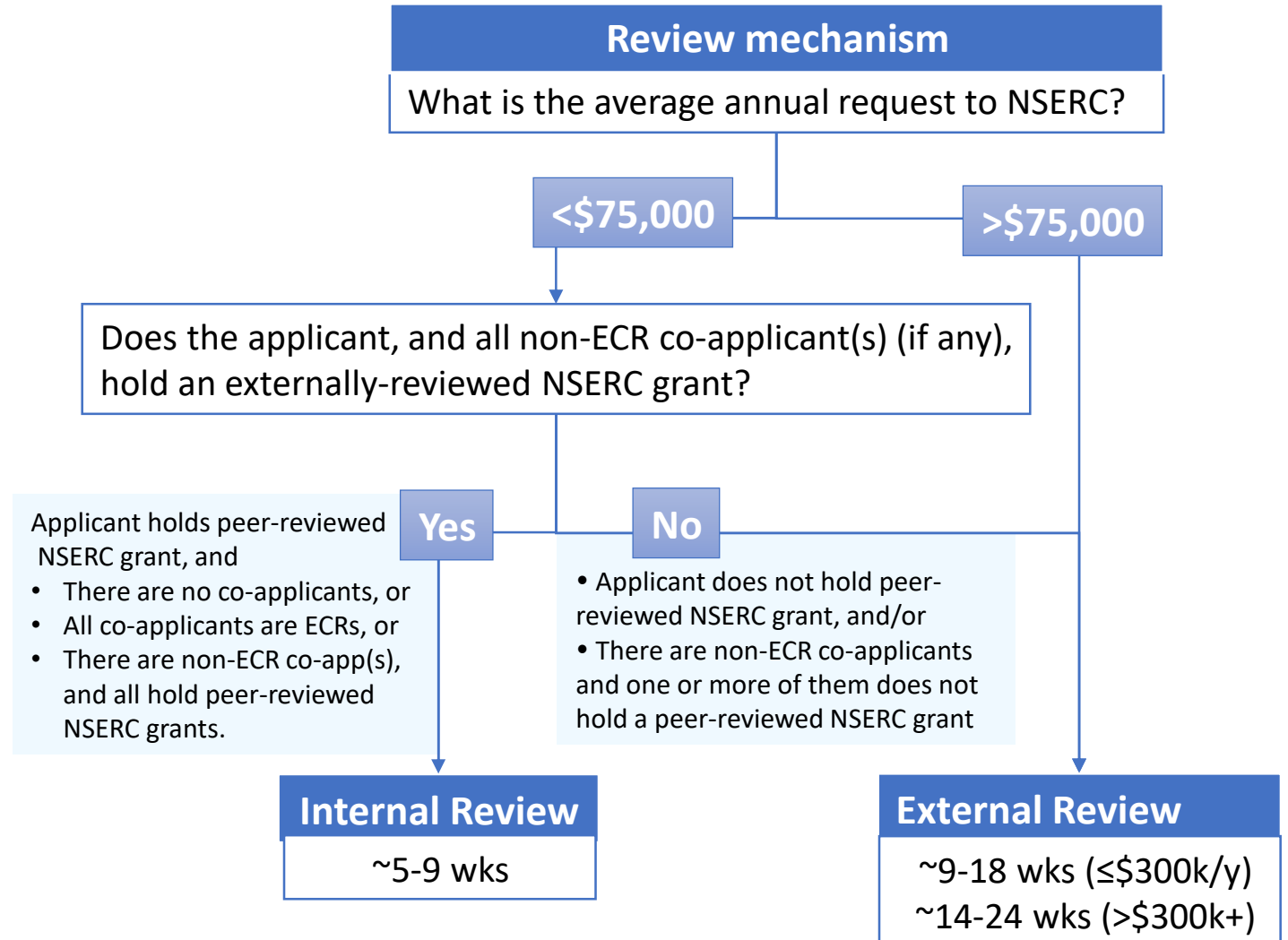
- Using the new template is recommended
- If you are close to completion in the previous template and do not wish to switch:

We will accept proposals in the previous template until **March 31, 2024**

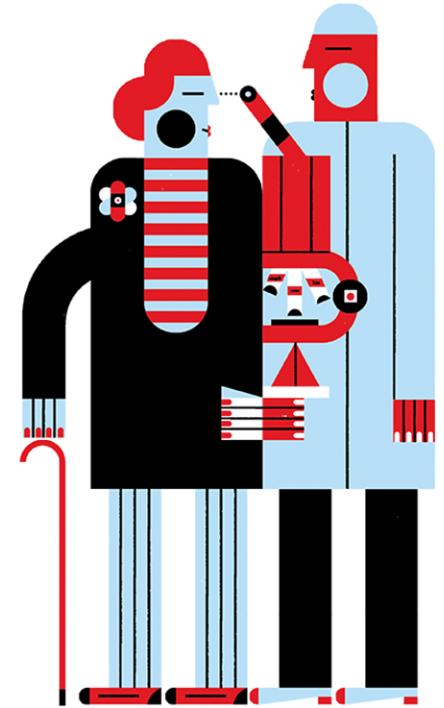
- Previous page limits apply
- Your proposal will be assessed against the previous merit criteria

Faster assessment times for more projects

- Alliance applications may be reviewed internally or externally. Internal review is faster than external.
- Previously, only applications requesting less than \$30k/y could be internally reviewed. This threshold is now increased to \$75k/y.
- Internal review is only used when the applicant and all co-applicants hold a peer-reviewed NSERC grant. *Co-applicants who are early career researchers (ECRs) are now exempt.*



4. Ensuring inclusive research support



Ensuring inclusive research support

New vouchers for early career researchers (ECRs)

- For researchers hired on or after July 1, 2018, adjusted for eligible delays in research.
- Vouchers can be applied toward Alliance Advantage grants, to replace the partner cash contribution.
- Pilot initiative: 200 vouchers to interested ECRs.
- If >200 expressions of interest received, vouchers will be allocated via random selection.
- 2024 Deadline: **February 22, 8 pm ET**

*Vouchers incentivize and de-risk engagement of a new partner.
Women and other equity seeking groups are more highly represented among ECRs.*

$$\begin{array}{r} \$10,000 \\ \text{Partner Voucher} \\ + \\ \$20,000 \\ \text{2:1 NSERC} \\ \text{Funding Ratio} \\ \hline \$30,000 \\ \text{in project funding} \end{array}$$

Ensuring inclusive research support

New vouchers for early career researchers (ECRs)

- LOI deadline: **February 22, 2024, 8 pm ET.**
 - **No need to identify a potential project or partner at this stage.**
 - Do **not** attach a cover letter.
- Vouchers awarded in Spring 2024; can be redeemed any time in the following 12 months.
- Maximum of one voucher per lifetime, regardless of whether it is redeemed.
- Partner(s) must be recognized for cost sharing, even if not contributing cash.
- Partner(s) must provide in-kind contributions.
- Voucher must be applied to a single new Alliance Advantage application.
- Vouchers cannot be used toward joint funding opportunities or special calls.

Ensuring inclusive research support

Changes to EDI information requested in proposal

- **Research Plan:** Revised to align with the NSERC guide on integrating EDI considerations in research: *Describe how EDI are considered at each stage of the research process (research questions, design, methodology, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of results).*
 - Not formally assessed
- **Team:** Removed
- **Training Plan:** Revised to invite information needed for new indicators (next slide)
 - Assessed by NSERC staff for all applications

Ensuring inclusive research support

Changes to indicators for EDI in training

	Meets	Exceeds	Exceptional
Describes specific and concrete practices	✓	✓	✓
Provides context for the proposed practices		✓	✓
Addresses multiple aspects of the training plan (e.g., training philosophy, recruitment, training environment, development opportunities for and skills gained by trainees)		✓	✓
Bases plan on evidence of effective practices			✓
Presents non-demographic indicators of success and plans to monitor/adapt as required (e.g., retention, advancement, sense of inclusion)			✓

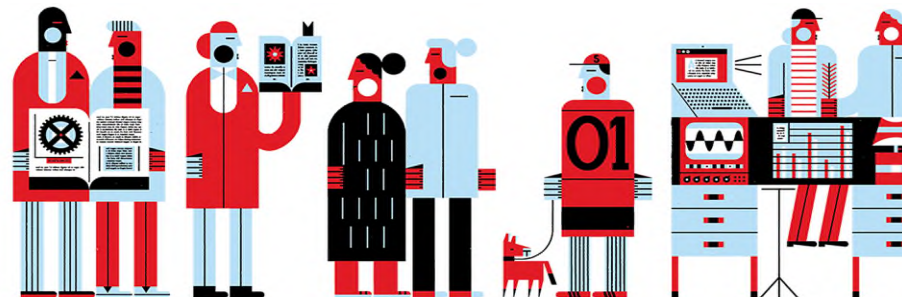
5. Strengthening relationships with the research community



Strengthening relationships with the research community

More flexible treatment of administrative issues

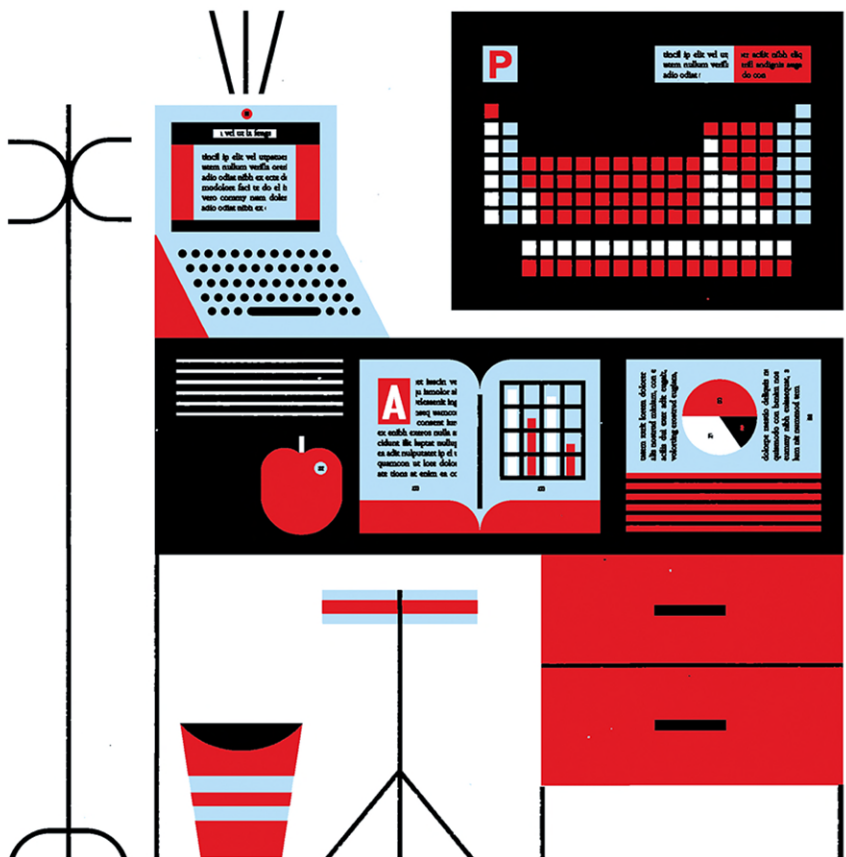
- Favouring returns over rejections
 - e.g., absence of F100A, partner profile error, insufficient EDI considerations
- Not all administrative deficiencies can be corrected (e.g., eligibility)
- Budget changes must be approved by the partners
- At the discretion of NSERC



Strengthening relationships with the research community

Opportunity to expand and extend projects: Extensions with funds

- You must apply in first 6 months of last year of award
 - Contact NSERC **file manager**; a short proposal is required
 - Not available if already in a one-year extension without funds
- New partner funds can be matched by NSERC for one additional year
 - Max. request: average annual amount originally awarded
 - Original cost sharing ratio applies
- Available to grants originally awarded ≤ 4 years of funding
 - Exclusions: Grants with private sector orgs awarded before July 23, 2021; grants substantially under/overspent.



Questions?

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