

Research Support Fund Allocation of Funds 2020-2021

Overview

In March 2018, Athabasca University launched its re-imagined [Strategic Research Plan](#), in conjunction with the implementation of the university's [Imagine: Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities Strategic Plan](#). The *Strategic Research Plan* signals a shift from merely doing research to identifying strategic research priorities, including building a sustainable research infrastructure to support research and innovative excellence.

A thoughtful and effective infrastructure is needed to support research excellence and build research capacity. The Research Support Fund is key to attaining these goals and helps defray the indirect costs of research, such as the day-to-day operational expenses incurred in supporting researchers' endeavors (e.g., administrative support; ensuring adherence to regulatory requirements; building strong academic-industry partnerships with a view to bringing new products and services to market).

The [Research Support Fund](#) program is a federal government investment in research that helps Canadian postsecondary institutions cover a portion of the indirect costs of managing research funds awarded by the three federal granting agencies – Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Opportunities exist for institutions to use the funds provided by the Research Support Fund to offset expenditures in five categories:

1. Research facilities
2. Research resources
3. Management and administration of an institution's research enterprise
4. Regulatory requirements and accreditation
5. Intellectual property

Strategic Investment

The notional grant amount for the 2020-2021 fiscal year is \$300,803.

The Research Support Fund is an important contributor to Athabasca University's continued success in supporting and building research capacity. In 2020-2021, Athabasca University will strategically invest its Research Support Fund award in the following initiatives.

Research resources. Building a sustainable research infrastructure is an important goal in the Strategic Research Plan. The creation of an infrastructure to accommodate high performance computing and extremely large databases has been a need expressed by Athabasca University researchers. Providing access to technology that will allow this type of research with appropriate technical support will be crucial to researchers institution-wide.

Management and administration. Researchers require skilled administrative support to facilitate the submission of research grant applications and to assist with the financial management and related reporting requirements of grants and awards. The RSF covers the costs associated with 1.5 administrative positions within the Research Centre. Other strategic investments in this category include

- grants mentorship, including grant-writing workshops and expert one-on-one grantsmanship mentorship, to help increase the competitiveness of research grant applications;
- software license, maintenance and hosting fees for the AU Research Portal, which is used to track grant applications and awards as well as human ethics certifications;
- a subscription to an electronic database that allows researchers to identify potential sources of government, industry and other funding, within Canada and abroad related to their research focus,
- costs for implementing AU's equity, diversity and inclusion commitments, including the development and delivery of an interactive, facilitator led course on *Achieving Excellence in Recruitment & Hiring* with a focus on EDI Principles and training in unconscious bias, and
- support for Research Data Management initiatives.

Regulatory requirements and accreditation. Ensuring compliance with human and animal ethics policies and standards is an integral component of the role of our Research Ethics Officer, which is fully funded by the RSF. Responsibilities of this role include, but are not limited to,

- providing administrative support to the Research Ethics Board;
- conveying relevant information to the Research Ethics Board and to researchers;
- coordinating both human and animal ethics approval processes; and
- tracking certifications to ensure compliance with applicable policies and standards.

Funding in this category may also be used to help defray the cost of maintaining the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) certification, in conjunction with the University of Alberta.

Research Support Fund Outcomes and Impact 2020-2021

April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021

The Research Support Fund (RSF) assists Canadian postsecondary institutions with the costs associated with managing their research enterprise, helping them to maintain a world-class research environment.

Strategic Investment

In 2020-2021 Athabasca University invested its Research Support Fund award (\$300,803) in the following expenditure categories:

Management and Administration of an Institution's Research Enterprise (66%)

- Salaries and benefit costs for administrative support staff (1.5 FTE) who facilitate the submission of research grant applications and assist with the financial management and related reporting requirements of Tri-Agency grants and awards.
- Software license, maintenance and hosting fees for the AU Research Portal, which is used to track grant applications and awards as well as human ethics certifications.
- Subscription costs for an electronic database that allows researchers to identify potential sources of government, industry and other funding, within Canada and abroad related to their research focus.
- Costs for implementing AU's equity, diversity and inclusion commitments, including the development and delivery of an interactive, facilitator led course on *Achieving Excellence in Recruitment & Hiring* with a focus on EDI Principles and training in unconscious bias.
- Costs associated with attending research administration-related conferences and/or webinars for professional development (e.g., CARA), including Research Data Management information sessions (e.g., RDM Summit).

Regulatory requirements and accreditation (34%)

Salary and benefit costs for Research Ethics Officer (1.0 FTE) and other costs devoted to ensuring compliance with human and animal ethics policies and standards.