CORNERSTONE RESEARCH SEED GRANTS

Terms of reference and application process

The Killam Research Fund supports research that aligns with the University of Alberta's and with the Killam Trusts' priorities to promote and achieve **Research Excellence** by increasing external funding, attract and retain **Research Talent** by funding research at all career stages, and advance **Institutional Research Goals** (i.e., *Forward with Purpose*) by building capacity for the large-scale, interdisciplinary research required to compete in the areas of global excellence and growth.

Cornerstone Research Seed Grants are funded through the Killam Research Fund. They are designed to support investigator-driven research projects in the fields of Humanities, Fine Arts, Social Sciences, Education, Business, or Law. These projects, led by individual researchers or collaborative teams, are focused on advancing scholarly knowledge. This program prepares researchers to apply for external funding, such as the SSHRC Insight Development Grant (IDG), the Insight Grant (IG), or equivalent external competitions that would benefit from project-focused seed funding. Applicants are expected to apply for external funding within two years. There are two funding streams researchers can apply for:

1. **Cornerstone Small Seed Grant** ($5,000 - $10,000)

    a. **Purpose:** The primary entry point for a new project idea. Provides funds for pilot studies, archival work, proof-of-concept development or other smaller-scale projects to be competitive for external funding.

    b. **Duration:** Maximum 1 year. Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

2. **Cornerstone Large Seed Grant** (up to $30,000)

    a. **Purpose:** Provides enhanced seed funding for new projects or distinct phases of an existing research program that, due to their scope, require a larger investment to be competitive for external funding. Supports resource-intensive activities such as establishing national or international collaborations, conducting multi-site pilot studies, or broadening participant and/or community engagement.

    b. **Duration:** Maximum 1 year. Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Eligibility

- Applications must propose research contributions to the fields of Humanities, Fine Arts, Social Sciences, Education, Business, or Law.

- All continuing paid faculty members are eligible to apply.

- Primary applicant eligibility for funding is typically restricted to tenure/tenure-track faculty. Please refer to the University of Alberta Policies and Procedures Online (UAPPOL) document entitled "*Eligibility to Apply for and Hold Research Funding Policy*".

- Graduate students are not eligible to apply.

- Successful applicants must wait two fiscal years from the award date before applying for another Cornerstone Research Seed Grant. Unsuccessful applications may be resubmitted in the next funding cycle.

- Funding can be used to support research-related activities, including, but not limited to:
  - Salaries, including graduate/undergraduate research assistants
  - Minor equipment, materials and supplies
  - Travel and hosting costs associated with research
  - Other direct research expenditures necessary to carry out the research
  - Dissemination and other knowledge mobilization activities (i.e., conference travel to present research funded through this application)
  - Teaching release will be considered on a case-by-case basis for Large Seed Grants at the discretion of the Dean and, where applicable, in consultation with the Chair. A letter of support is required to verify that appropriate approvals are in place.

- Funding for indirect research costs, supplemental or top-up funding for existing projects, costs covered by other internal or external funds, ongoing operation and maintenance costs, and grant preparation and grant writing costs are not eligible.

- The Cornerstone Research Seed Grant is not intended to serve as matching funding. Matching funding can be applied for through the Strategic Research Initiatives Fund (SRIF).

Application process

To apply, log in using your CCID to submit an Application Form. An application template is available to work on your responses offline before submission. Only applications that are approved for funding need to be submitted for approval through the Researcher Home Page.

Submission instructions will be included in the funding notification.

Applicants are encouraged to include specific actions to advance institutional strategic goals and objectives, such as those indicated in [Shape: A Strategic Plan of Impact](#), [Forward with Purpose: A Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation](#), [Changing the Story: An Integrated Action Plan](#), or [Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan.](#)

All applications must outline steps to build a diverse team and inclusive research environment (see the [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Research Resource Page](#)).

Selection process

The Cornerstone Research Seed Grant is adjudicated by a committee chaired by the Vice-President (Research) or delegate. The committee includes up to five members from the university's research community who are suitably representative of the institution's diversity and who conduct research in the designated fields of Humanities, Fine Arts, Social Sciences, Education, Business, or Law. All adjudicators complete unconscious bias training.

The following criteria will be taken into consideration when adjudicating applications:

- **Challenge:** The clarity of the application for a knowledgeable but non-specialist audience, outlining the research's potential, novelty, significance, likely impact[1], alignment with the University of Alberta's and Killam Trusts' priorities, and appropriateness of the methods/approach within the context of the appropriate research field(s);

- **Feasibility**: The efficacy, justification, and adequacy of the timeline and budget to support the proposed research, including demonstration of realistic financial planning and how any other sources of funding will be used to achieve the research project's objectives, if applicable;

- **Capability:** The applicant's research record, accomplishments and impact in view of their career stage;

- **External Funding Plan:** A clear and specific plan demonstrating that external funding to support the research project will be sought after receiving the award. Applications must identify specific external funding agencies and programs, provide realistic submission timelines, and explain how the Killam seed funding will position the research for success in these competitions. Killam Research Fund should not be considered a substitute for applications to federal, provincial or other peer-reviewed research granting agencies (e.g., SSHRC).

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[1] [Forward with Purpose](#) defines impact broadly and inclusively to recognize the validity of different dimensions and interpretations of impact across disciplines, research programs and all related scholarly activities. These include short- and long-term economic, environmental and social impacts and engagements. See the [Declaration on Research Assessment](#).

Demand for funds typically exceeds the available funding, so not all meritorious projects can be supported. Priority will be given to the following applicants:

- New and junior faculty to support exceptional research programs

- Indigenous faculty and faculty in equity-denied groups[2]

- Proven senior scholars with solid publication records seeking support for new, creative and leading-edge research programs

- Applicants who have not received previous grants from the Killam Research Fund (Knowledge Mobilization, Cornerstone, or Catalyst)

Grant Administration

- All conditions on awards must be cleared within six months from the award date, unless an exemption from this requirement is sought and obtained from the Office of the Vice-President (Research). Requests for exemption should be sent to killamresearchfund@ualberta.ca with justification for the request. If this guideline is not met, the award will expire.

- Awardees grant the OVPR and the Killam Trusts the right to publish the name of the PI, Project Title, and amount of funding received.

- The OVPR and Killam Trusts must be acknowledged in communications, publications or conferences arising from funded research, and on equipment or facilities purchased or developed with funds.

- Recipients of Killam seed funds must apply for external funding within two years.

- Recipients must notify killamresearchfund@ualberta.ca if they have or will receive funding from another source for the same project or scope of work, providing justification for why Killam funds are required beyond other funding received.

- Any funds remaining at the end of the project term will be returned to the source.

- One-time extensions of up to one year may be requested through the internal research funding coordinator. Please send an email to killamresearchfund@ualberta.ca to initiate the extension.

- The PI must submit a final report to killamresearchfund@ualberta.ca within 30 days of the project's end date, explaining how funds were spent to support the project. Reporting templates will be provided, including, but not necessarily limited to, the following:
  - How your project has helped advance the University of Alberta's and the Killam Trusts' priorities to promote and achieve ***Research Excellence*** by

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[2] Forward with Purpose indicates that equity-denied groups also include women, visible minorities, researchers from Black, 2SLGBTQ+, francophone and diasporic communities, and persons with disabilities or who identify as disabled.

increasing external funding, attract and retain **Research Talent** by funding research at all career stages, and advance **Institutional Research Goals** (i.e., *[Forward with Purpose](#)*).

- o Summary of funded activities, including how they have resulted in revenue generation from external funding sources or improved the competitiveness of the project for future funding applications.

- o Any other outcomes resulting from your projects, such as new knowledge, models, policy, practices, training and mentorship of students, or innovation and commercialization of products.

- o Recipients who do not meet the final report deadline are ineligible to receive future funding until the outstanding report has been submitted.

Submission Deadlines

Intake of applications will normally occur twice each fiscal year (Summer and Fall). Due to the program pause, there will be an additional intake in Winter 2026. Upcoming deadlines are as follows:

Application Deadline	Adjudication Period	Notice of Results
February 6, 2026	February 7 – March 6, 2026	March 16 – 20, 2026
July 3, 2026	July 6 – August 21, 2026	August 28, 2026
November 6, 2026	November 9 – December 11, 2026	December 18, 2026

Records from this competition will be managed in accordance with the Access to Information Act and the Protection of Privacy Act.