



NEW ASPIRATION RESEARCH CLUSTER PROGRAM CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Deadlines: NOI: November 15th, 2022. Full Application: January 30th, 2023.

[Aspiration 2030](#) priorities include investing strategically to support research excellence, incentivizing interdisciplinary collaboration, and raising the profile of our research impact areas. UVic's Office of the Vice-President Research and Innovation is pleased to offer a new opportunity for UVic-led research clusters to apply for internal support to enable growth and impact.

In this context, research clusters are informal groups or networks of researchers with complementary but interdisciplinary expertise who work together to achieve a better and richer understanding of a common set of research questions than they could attain working individually. This would normally reflect a program of research rather than a specific project. This competition is open to UVic faculty from all disciplines.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Aspiration Research Cluster program provides capacity-building resources and support to propel interdisciplinary research teams **to address important economic or societal challenges**. We are looking for clusters that have the potential to develop into global leaders on relevant topics, and that will use cluster funding to position themselves to compete for **major new external funding** (e.g. NFRF Transformation, SSHRC Partnership Grant, CFI Innovation Fund, major NSERC Alliance, governmental programs, donors or foundations, international grants, etc.) and/or demonstrate **significant community impact** (e.g., new strategic partnerships, generate meaningful intellectual property for licensing or commercialization activities, creation of new centre or institute, influencing public policy or major government directions, leading public discourse on major issues, etc.).

Clusters should be able to sustain activity and their impact beyond the period covered by this program.

This is a pilot program with two planned rounds of funding. The first competition will proceed as shown below and the second one will be announced in 2023. Ongoing funding is subject to program success and availability of resources.

Key dates for the 2022 competition:



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Clusters can emerge from any discipline, but those that align with the Aspiration 2030 impact areas and priorities will be prioritized.

Note: Research clusters are not intended to replace Research Centres. Research Centre members are eligible to apply as part of a cluster. Clusters may also be hosted by a Research Centre, be a subset of a Research Centre, or involve multiple Research Centres.

TEAM COMPOSITION

- Cluster members should include researchers from relevant disciplines and diverse perspectives who receive funding from varied sources.
- Each cluster should have a nominated PI or Co-PIs who will provide leadership and be responsible for correspondence about the clusters, including updates and annual reporting. The PI should be a full-time UVic research faculty member.
- Faculty members may participate in more than one cluster but cannot be the designated PI/Co-PI for more than one application.
- Clusters may include external partners from research institutions, industry, NGOs, foundations, hospitals, government, or international partners. Relevant partnerships involved in downstream commercialization or implementation steps are an asset.
- Inclusion of early-career researchers and members of equity-deserving groups is encouraged.
- Team members will need to articulate how long they have been collaborating for and in what capacity (noting existing projects, partnerships, grant applications, etc.). Both emerging and well-established clusters will be considered but there is an expectation that cluster members are already collaborating or have demonstrated strong potential to collaborate.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Cluster funding is intended to support catalytic activities that will help to build the identity and collaboration potential of the cluster and could be used as leverage to apply for major research funding, to build cluster capacity, develop research plans, organize cluster-building events, or communicate achievements (see full list of eligible expenses below).

Each cluster may apply for any amount up to a total of \$150,000.

Funding can be used to cover the following expenses:

- Salaries for essential staff for cluster activities (e.g., cluster or communications/event coordinators, program manager)
- Course releases for participating UVic faculty members, only where they are justified by specific activities in building research capacity or applying for major grants – with Chair/Dean approval (max. 2 per cluster, per year)
- Honoraria for community members and/or elders participating in cluster activities
- Capacity-building events (e.g., venue rental, catering)
- Cluster meetings, retreats, workshops, especially those aimed at generating major funding applications
- Professional facilitation for team-building or strategic planning
- Professional grant writing and editing

- Matching funds for major external grants that involve multiple cluster members (these funds will constitute the OVPRI contribution to such projects).
- Travel (e.g., partnership-building, invited guests)
- Non-academic publications (e.g., annual report)
- Website development and social media coordination
- Expenses that support equity, diversity, and inclusion (e.g., external EDI consultant support, interpretation for events, provision of childcare during meetings)

Other expenses must be well justified and approved in advance by emailing [Stephanie Keenlyside](#).

Funding cannot be used as a substitute for applying for external funding or as a replacement for other existing internal and/or external funding. Cluster funding is not intended to support the direct costs of research.

Each cluster will be funded for up to two years, with funding for year two contingent upon receipt and approval of an annual report to the OVPRI that details progress towards the goals, milestones and outcomes articulated in the proposal.

Any fund balances at year-end can be carried over to the second year, and teams may be given a six-month no-cost extension period in which to spend any remaining funds. An explanation for unspent funds should be provided in the annual report.

EVALUATION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed by a committee chaired by the VP Research and Innovation employing a transparent and equitable evaluation process. Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Research excellence and potential impact which:
 - Addresses an important challenge in an area where UVic has pre-existing strengths and a chance to raise our profile.
 - Has potential to achieve measurable impacts on society and benefits to Canada.
 - Aligns with at least one of the impact areas or priorities outlined in Aspiration 2030.
- Strength of the team and complementarity which shows:
 - Established excellence of the team members in terms of research productivity, funding and partnerships.
 - Collaborations involving relevant disciplines and diverse perspectives with a varied funding portfolio.
 - Diversity in membership, including early-career researchers and individuals from equity-deserving groups.
 - Synergy between team members, with a history of productive collaboration.
- Cluster plan
 - Clear description of goal(s) and outcomes of the cluster (e.g., increase in external funding applications and research productivity, strategic partnership development, impact on society, potential economic development, etc.) and a clear and credible plan to achieve goal(s) and outcomes
 - Sustainability beyond period of cluster support
 - Dissemination and outreach strategy

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The call has three steps, a notice of intent, full application, and a proposal pitch.

STEP 1: NOTICE OF INTENT

The NOI is mandatory. This will be used to establish the program eligibility of each cluster and to establish the required expertise for review of full applications.

A 1-page summary should be sent to [Stephanie Keenlyside](#) by **November 15th, 2022**, including the following:

- Title of cluster;
- Proposed PI and team members;
- Main Aspiration 2030 Impact Area or priority being addressed;
- Brief summary of area of research, key challenges, and the goals and objectives of the cluster;
- Proposed activities and estimated amount and duration of funding requested (up to \$150K).

STEP 2: FULL APPLICATION

Applications will be submitted via an online form by **January 30th, 2023**. The submission system will open in early January.

Applicants will be required to upload a pdf of your full proposal. Please use an 8 ½" x 11" format, single-spaced, 11pt font, and standard margins (2cm around). Applications should include: (i) the cluster's name, (ii) the designated PI or Co-PIs, and (iii) the following sections (saved as one PDF document):

1. Cluster Overview (maximum 250 words)
 - Provide a lay summary of the proposed research cluster
2. Cluster Description (maximum 1 page)
 - Describe the research area; articulate how this area responds to key challenges/problems and describe how the research proposes to address this.
 - Outline how this work will have a meaningful impact on society and benefits to Canada.
 - Describe the goal(s) of creating this cluster, articulating what new or expanded activities and objectives the requested support will facilitate. Describe how you plan to grow the research productivity and institutional impact of the cluster on a sustainable basis, including your plans to secure continuing external funding and disseminate and increase the uptake of the research.
3. Team (maximum 1 page)
 - List the research team members and describe their complementary roles in the cluster. Discuss how the members constitute an interdisciplinary team that will successfully achieve the cluster goal(s) with the requested supports.
 - Describe any track record of collaboration, including significant funding the team has received to date.
 - Describe existing external partners, and their contribution to the cluster.

4. Budget (maximum 1 page)
 - Include an itemized, yearly budget of the funding request, with justification of the activities (any amount up to \$150K total over 1-2 years).
5. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (maximum 1 page)
 - Discuss how the cluster will meaningfully engage underrepresented groups¹ and early-career researchers.
 - Explain your plan to promote the integration of EDI-related considerations in your research design and practice, including any potential impact on marginalized or underrepresented communities for social or economic growth opportunities.
6. References (optional; maximum 1 page)
7. Curriculum Vitae
 - For each team member provide a 2-page CV summary highlighting the most important accomplishments relevant to the proposed cluster. [Download a template.](#)
8. Dean(s) sign-off page - [download Dean sign-off page](#)

STEP 3: PITCH YOUR PROPOSAL

A shortlist of applicants will be asked to pitch their proposals at a meeting to be arranged after all applications are received.

Questions about the program or how to apply?

Contact [Stephanie Keenlyside](#), Strategic Project Officer.

¹ Includes members of groups with historical and/or current barriers to equity, including, but not limited to:

- First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, and all other Indigenous Peoples;
- members of groups that commonly experience discrimination due to race, ancestry, colour, religion and/or spiritual beliefs, or place of origin;
- persons with visible and/or invisible (physical and/or mental) disabilities;
- persons who identify as women; and
- persons of marginalized sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.