Voucher for Innovation and Productivity (VIP)

Contents

Program Information and Eligibility Requirements

Program Overview and Benefits

The Voucher for Innovation and Productivity program (VIP) supports the collaboration between Academia and Industry to solve an industry-based problem and drive the commercialization of Intellectual Property (IP). The institution will leverage the unique skills and specialized infrastructure that is instrumental to streamline internal innovations and commercialization needs. Resulting in targeted training of individuals and direct engagement with industry to work on commercially viable solutions.

When applying to VIP, eligible applicants can also leverage funds from several federal Co-Funding Partners, through a streamlined, single-application process. Current Co-Funding Partners include:

- NSERC – Alliance
- NSERC – Engage
- Mitacs Accelerate

Benefits to Industry Partners	Benefits to Post-Secondary Institutions (Researchers and Students)
• Gain access to cutting-edge knowledge, new talent, unique facilities, and equipment to extend company R&D capabilities • Create solutions to current industry challenges, leading to revenue and job creation, follow-on investment, increased productivity and/or cost savings • Access several provincial and federal funding sources through one application • Establish relationships within the research	• Use knowledge and innovative ideas, to help solve real-world R&D challenges • Establish relationships with industry and within OCI's networks • Provide students with valuable experiential learning opportunities

How Funding Works

OCI Contribution	• 50 per cent (maximum) of total eligible project costs, from $20,000 to $150,000 • Minimum OCI contribution $20,000 per year
SME Project Contributions	• 50 per cent (minimum) of total eligible project costs (i.e., minimum 1:1 match to OCI contribution), in cash • At least half of the 1:1 match must be spent at the post- secondary institution; remainder may be spent at the company • Cannot be leveraged with other federal or provincial grant programs unless otherwise stated in this program guideline
Example	• Example total eligible project costs $200,000 • Maximum OCI contribution $100,000 to post-secondary institution • Minimum Industry Partner contribution 100,000 ($50,000 to post-secondary institution, plus $50,000 spent at the company)

OCI Funding Recipient	• Publicly funded post-secondary institution (i.e., university, college, research hospital)
Institutional Overhead	• Overhead is not an eligible project expense and should not be included in the project budget • Overhead on the OCI contribution will be remitted separately by OCI to the institution (10 per cent of OCI contributions to direct project costs) • Overhead on the Industry Partner contribution payable to the institution must be discussed with the institution's research office at the time of application, to ensure it is correctly accounted for

Applicants may jointly apply for the following co-funding with an OCI VIP application where all eligibility criteria are met. Please see the Eligibility tab (Co-Funder Eligibility) for more details.

- NSERC – Alliance
- NSERC - Engage
- Mitacs Accelerate

NSERC - Alliance

	NSERC - Alliance
Contribution	OCI - $20,000 to $30,000; NSERC - $20,000 to $30,000
Industry Partner Matching (Minimum)	$30,000 (minimum 50% must be spent at the academic institution)
Maximum Project Duration	12 months
Sector	All

NSERC - Engage

	NSERC - Engage
Contribution	OCI - $20,000 to $30,000; NSERC - $20,000 to $30,000
SME Project Contributor (Minimum)	$30,000 (minimum 50% must be spent at the academic institution)
Maximum Project Duration	12 months
Sector	All

Mitacs Accelerate

Mitacs Accelerate funds collaborative research between companies or not-for-profit organizations in all sectors, students and/or postdoctoral fellows, and professors at Canadian academic institutions.

	Mitacs Accelerate
Maximum Investment	$7,500 per intern per four- to six- month internship unit
Industry Partner Matching (Minimum)	$7,500 per intern per four- to six- month internship unit

Project Duration	Six to 12 months
Sector	All
Institutional Overhead	OCI: N/A

For Mitacs Accelerate-partnered projects, industry partner should send their contribution to Mitacs and Mitacs will release the funds to the post-secondary institutions upon activation of the project by OCI. Applicants will be allowed to apply for more than one internship.

Eligibility Requirements

OCI VIP eligibility requirements are listed on this page. Please review the list of additional eligibility requirements when jointly applying to federal Co-Funding Partners.

Research Partner

- Principal investigator at an Ontario-accredited, publicly funded university/research hospital, or applied research officer at an Ontario-accredited, publicly funded college (additional primary researchers must be listed as team members in the application). Principal investigator at an Ontario- accredited, publicly funded university/research hospital, or applied research officer at an Ontario- accredited, publicly funded college (additional primary researchers must be listed as team members in the application)
- Adjunct professors may be eligible on a case-by-case basis. At a minimum, the adjunct professor must 1) actively conduct research at an Ontario institution, 2) be allowed by the institution to hold a grant and be given an institutional account, and 3) be allowed to supervise students.
- Has an arms-length relationship with the industry partner
- In good financial and reporting standing with OCI

SME Project Contributor

- For-profit, incorporated in Ontario for at least two years, and has a valid CRA business number; has a minimum of five full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in Ontario; is using or developing technology innovation or innovative processes for competitive advantage in provincial, national and/or global markets
- Has operations (production and/or R&D) in Ontario related to the project
- Has the intent and potential to apply, exploit and/or commercialize the results of the project for the economic benefit of Ontario
- Has the necessary expertise and resources to put the project into effect within an appropriate timeframe
- Company subsidiaries (organizations with headquarters outside of Ontario) are eligible, provided that the Ontario operations meet all the above criteria
- In good financial and reporting standing with OCI
- A company cannot hold more than $150,000 in VIP funding at one time, or $525,000 of Industry-Academic Collaborative Grants/Investments in a lifetime. Companies with over $150,000 in active VIP projects must complete those projects (including all final reporting) prior to OCI considering other applications for funding. Exemptions to this rule must be authorized by the VP, BD and provided by the PM and Program Lead with the application.

Project

- Leverages the unique capabilities of the research environment and of the post-secondary research team, and is non-competitive with Ontario private-sector capabilities

- Intellectual Property (IP) arising from the project will be managed by the project participants as OCI does not claim or manage IP rights (note: Co-Funding Partners may have different IP policies; please consult their guidelines for more information).
- All participants must co-operate in providing project outcomes and metrics in required reports
- View a list of eligible project expenses

VIP Partnered Project Eligibility, NSERC

NSERC Alliance
- NSERC Alliance   Applicant
- Eligible to hold Tri-Council funds
- Faculty from an eligible Ontario-based University
- University researchers with active OCI or NSERC peer-reviewed grants
- Adjunct professors will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Adjunct professors who meet NSERC's eligibility criteria and whose primary place of employment is at an eligible Canadian university may apply to NSERC grants programs.

SME Contributor
- For-profit SME organization, with Canadian R&D and/or manufacturing operations related directly to the project, and the capability to exploit the research results
- Has under 500 full-time employees globally and has been in operations for a minimum of two years

Project/Expenses
- Up to $30,000 from NSERC Alliance, up to $30,000 from OCI VIP and minimum $30,000 from the industry partner (minimum 50% must be spent at the academic institution)
- Project duration up to 12 months
- SME-University R&D collaborations with the high potential for regional economic development and commercialization in Ontario
- Please refer to the full NSERC Alliance guidelines for program eligibility and information
- More details

NSERC Engage for Colleges Eligibility
Applicant
- Ontario-based College eligible to hold Tri-Council funds
- New relationship with the industry partner with no existing or past association between the college and the industry partner is permitted. (Note: it is not considered a new partnership if there has been previous research collaboration between the college and the company or any of its divisions; a consulting contract in excess of a few days; or involvement of a member of the college research team with the company. In addition, if an employee of the company sits on the Board of Directors [or equivalent] of the college, this would be considered an established relationship.)

SME Contributor
- For-profit SME organization, with Canadian R&D and/or manufacturing operations related directly to the project, and the capability to exploit the research results
- Has of 5-499 full-time employees and has been in operations for a minimum of two years
- First time collaboration between the company and the college

- Industrial partners are limited to two Engage grants awarded per fiscal year (April 1-March 31; includes the company's combined 'Engage Grant for Universities' and 'Engage Grant for Colleges' participation for that year; includes VIP-Engage and standalone Engage projects). However, partners providing cash contributions to ongoing NSERC-funded projects outside of Engage will be allowed up to two additional Engage applications per year

Project/Expenses
- Up to $30,000 from NSERC, up to $30,000 from OCIᴇ VIP and minimum $30,000 from the industry partner (minimum 50% must be spent at the academic institution).
- Project duration up to 12 months
- SME-College R&D collaborations with the high potential for regional economic development and commercialization in Ontario
- Equipment/material/operating costs (up to 20 per cent of NSERC budget), overhead/administration (up to 20 per cent of NSERC budget), project management (up to 10 per cent of NSERC budget), and faculty release costs (up to $9,000/course/semester)
- Travel expenses are eligible for college personnel to conduct the project but do not include international conferences to present research results.
- For VIP–Engage partners are limited to two Engage grants awarded per fiscal year (April 1-March 31; includes the company's combined VIP-Engage and standalone Engage projects). However, partners providing cash contributions to ongoing NSERC-funded projects outside of Engage will be allowed up to two additional Engage applications per year
- Please refer to the full NSERC Engage for Colleges guidelines for program eligibility and information

Mitacs

Applicant
- Faculty from an Ontario university/research hospital
- Eligible to hold Tri-Council funds

Intern
- Canadian citizen, permanent resident, or international student
- Full-time graduate student, OR
- Post-doctoral fellow (except those who have previously held a Mitacs Elevate award), with PhD granted no more than five years prior to the project start date

SME Project Contributor
- N/A

Project
- $7,500 per intern per four- to six-month internship unit
- The company's contributions to the Mitacs internship cannot be used as the same industry contribution in the OCI budget form. The company must provide a cash contribution of $7,500 in addition to the cash contribution required for the VIP project.
- Eligibility of not-for-profit partners and project economic orientation must be assessed by the Mitacs Business Development Manager prior to proposal submission, Mitacs guidelines

How to Apply

Application Process and Timelines

If you are ready to apply for the Voucher for Innovation and Productivity Program (VIP), the Industry Partner should connect with their OCI Business Development Manager (BDM) to start the process towards initiating an application.

If new to OCI, the Industry Partner should complete the Program Enquiry Form (click above) to be connected with a Business Development Manager to discuss VIP eligibility and how to start the application process. ***Please note that completion of this form does not constitute an application for funding**. Once the Program Enquiry Form has been completed, an OCI Business Development Manager (BDM) will contact you within two business days to discuss the opportunity and if required, to assist in identifying a Research Partner.

1. The opportunity will undergo an initial vetting and due diligence assessment by OCI to ensure that opportunities fulfill all eligibility criteria and are suitable for the VIP program. The opportunity must be both eligible and suitable to move forward in this very competitive program.

2. If the opportunity is selected as eligible and suitable for the program, you will be sent an auto-generated link to OCI's online application system, AccessOCI, to complete the application. The application will remain open for 90 days.

3. Complete the online application form. Both the Industry Partner and the Research Partner can log into OCI's AccessOCI using your existing username and password to complete the application. If it is the first time you are using AccessOCI, please follow instructions to create a username and password. The application must be completed jointly between the Industry Partner and the Research Partner. Please ensure only eligible expenses are included in the budget as OCI will not reimburse ineligible expenses. Once both the Industry Partner and Research Partner have jointly completed the application including terms and conditions, it must then be submitted (by either partner) to the post-secondary institution's Research Office for endorsement.

    For assistance, please see the following resources:
    - o Sample application form (for reference purposes only. Applications are only accepted through OCI's online system where full application requirements are listed)
    - o Eligible Expenses Guidelines
    - o OCI's Knowledgee Base (Frequently Asked Questions)

The Research Office must then submit the application to the OCI Business Development Manager (BDM) for final endorsement and submission. **The BDM endorsement may take up to one week.** Once the endorsement is provided and OCI internal review completed, the application will proceed to external review.

Assessment Process and Criteria

VIP is a discretionary, non-entitlement program with limited funding. All eligible applications undergo a review process where the applications are assessed against program objectives and assessment criteria. Not all eligible applications will be approved for funding.

1. Complete applications will undergo a written external peer review by three subject-matter experts from academia, industry and/or government. Reviewers are contractually bound by confidentiality and conflict of interest requirements.

2. Recommendations from the peer review process will be assessed by OCI's Internal Review Panel, which will have responsibility for the final OCI decision. Decision notifications are typically provided within eight to 10 weeks of application submission.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated against assessment criteria including:

- Significance of the challenge/opportunity to support the company's business strategy and/or growth.
- Rationale for the proposed project to address the company-specific problem or opportunity.
- Clarity and appropriateness of the research and development methodology, objectives, and roles of each partner.
- Feasibility of the project plan (i.e., milestones, budget, timeframe, project management plan and risks).
- Appropriateness of the team's experience, expertise, and resources to perform the proposed project.
- Clarity of the rationale and plan for collaboration between the research team and company.
- Clarity and feasibility of the plan to implement and/or commercialize the project results, including management of Intellectual Property emerging from the project, and next steps after the project completion.
- Adequacy of the company resources and capacity to commercialize the results.
- Likelihood of economic benefit for the company in Ontario (including job creation/retention, new revenue generation, investment attraction, cost savings, value chain development) within three years of project completion.
- Overall quality and completeness of the application.

Project Activation, Funds and Reporting

Project Activation

- Upon approval of a project for funding, the post-secondary institution and industry partner will be forwarded a copy of OCI's standard funding agreement. This funding agreement must be signed, via OCI's online electronic signature function, by the institution and industry within 30 days of notification of award.
- A copy of the Funding Agreement can be downloaded for your reference. Please do not fill out this form as a copy of the agreement will be generated through OCI's online management system and sent to you upon approval of your project.
- The purpose of the OCI funding agreement is to define roles and obligations for the project partners with regards to OCI's guidelines and funding contribution only. Project partners are encouraged to enter into a separate research agreement to ensure agreement on other roles and responsibilities specific to the project.
- The project will be activated upon receipt of the signed funding agreement. The start date will be by default the date of activation and cannot be changed.

Reference Documents

- OCI Funding Agreement

Flow of Funds

- The OCI contributions are provided to the post-secondary institution. Upon activation, OCI will release an advance payment equal to 25 per cent of the OCI award amount. Subsequent payments are made upon submission and approval of progress reports and reimbursement requests. 10 per cent of the OCI award will be held back until project completion. For example:

Example OCI Award amount	$100,000
Funds released upon project activation	$25,000 [advance]
Holdback	$10,000

- OCI will not release any funds until the project is activated and will not be held responsible for any expenses incurred for the project prior to approval of award. If for any reason the requirements for activation are not met within thirty (30) days from the date of release of the approval notification, the funding offer may be retracted.
- All Industry Partner cash contributions to be spent at the post-secondary institution must be provided directly to the institution. The institution may be requested to provide confirmation of receipt of these funds.
- The holdback will be released upon project completion, receipt, and approval of the
- following: Applicant and Client final progress and financial reports, outcomes, and attestation from the institution regarding the use of funds.

Project Reporting

The following project reports will be required. Project reporting requirements are a contractual obligation. Failure to report is a breach of contract and may result in the termination of your contract, forfeiture of remaining project funding and/or a request to return funds.

Annual Progress and Claims Reports

An Annual Report is required for projects with durations greater than 12 months. Thirty days prior to end of 12 months, Research Partners will receive a notification from OCI's AccessOCI system, to complete the Annual Report, including Claims Report with detailed expenditures for reimbursement of eligible expenses.

Final Progress and Claims Report

A Final Report is required for all projects. Forty-five days prior to the scheduled project completion date, the Industry and Research Partners will receive a notification from OCI's AccessOCI system to complete the Final Project Report, including C l a i m s Report with detailed expenditures for reimbursement of eligible expenses. All required final reports by all partners must be submitted within 30 days of project end date in order to release the holdback and maintain good financial standing with OCI**.**

If an extension to complete the project is required, the Research Partner must request it prior to the scheduled project end date, using the Project Administration tab in their AccessOCI project file. A maximum extension of three months will be allowable for projects with duration up to 12 months, and six months for projects with duration 13 to 24 months.

Progress and Claims Reporting

At the mid-year point [6 months] the project, the post-secondary institution's finance office will be requested to submit a Progress and Claims Report with detailed expenditures for reimbursement of

eligible expenses. Adhoc claims can be requested to support submission of claims as requested. Please contact the Program Manager to request quarterly reports. OCI will only release funding upon approval of the submitted progress and claims report.

Retrospective Survey

At one, two, and three years after project completion, the Industry Partner will be sent a link to complete a retrospective survey to collect data on commercial outcomes from the project. This information is required by OCI for assessment of program impact and continuous improvement.

Project Changes

- For any variances to the OCI budget of $5000 or greater, or extensions to the project end date, the Research Partner must complete a Project Change Request **prior to the project end** date, using the Project Administration tab in the AccessOCI project file. A maximum extension of
- three months will be allowable for projects with duration up to 12 months, and six months for projects with duration 13 to 24 months.
- For any other material change to the project, including but not limited to changes related to the project's Research Partner, Industry Partner, scope of work or eligible expenses, the partners must contact the Program Manager as soon as the changes are known.

Contacts/ FAQ

Search OCI's Knowledge Base of Frequently Asked Questions; FAQ

For further questions regarding program guidelines, eligibility, and submitting the online application, please contact your OCI Business Development Manager (BDM) or:

For more information on the VIP program, please contact:

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