



# EAR TO THE GROUND (E2G) RESEARCH INVESTMENTS

Funding Opportunity Guide – Fall 2025 Funding Round

Investment Period	6-36 months
Funding Available	<u>Total for round:</u> \$1.5 million <u>Per project:</u> Maximum of \$500,000
Applications Open	November 21, 2025
Application Deadline	January 21, 2026, 1:00 PM (AST)
Notification of Stage 1 Results	February 2026
Research Pitches	February 23 – March 13, 2026
Anticipated Notice of Funding Decision	March 2026
Anticipated Start of Funding	April 2026

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>About the Program .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Resources.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Eligibility .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Project Eligibility Requirements.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Applicant Eligibility.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Assessment Process .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Assessment Criteria .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Screening .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Assessment .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Scientific Merit Review .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Submission Ranking.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Integrated Review.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Feedback to Applicants .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Proposal Submission .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Stage 1: Written Application.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Summary Project &amp; Applicant Information .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Applicant Information.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Host Organization .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Proposal Title .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Overview .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Details.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Research Design .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Workplan .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Results Distribution Plan.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Revenue Streams.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Projected Costs .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Match Funding .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Team Members.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Supporting Materials.....</b>	<b>14</b>

**Stage 2: Research Pitch ..... 15**  
    **Purpose .....15**  
    **Format .....15**  
    **Scheduling .....15**  
    **Accessibility & Accommodations.....15**  
**Appendix 1: Assessment – Program Elements ..... 16**  
**Appendix 2: Scientific Merit Review ..... 18**

## INTRODUCTION

This guide provides instructions on how to complete and submit your **Ear to the Ground (E2G) Research Investments** proposal, including details on the required information expected in both the **written application** and **pitch** stages. Review this document before and during completion of your proposal to ensure you provide all the requested information needed for Research Nova Scotia (RNS) and reviewers to consider your submission for this funding opportunity.

## GLOSSARY

**End user:** An individual or group that directly applies or implements research outputs to achieve outcomes. This excludes research colleagues, who apply or implement the outputs for further research.

**Host Organization:** The Nova Scotia-based entity to which Research Nova Scotia (RNS) will disburse awarded funds and that assumes full responsibility for the appropriate financial management, reporting, and oversight of those funds. To be eligible as a Host Organization, the entity must demonstrate a legal and functional presence in Nova Scotia.

**Match funding:** A type of funding where there is a financial requirement for the applicant to secure funding from other sources, such as institutional, government, or corporate partners (e.g. CFI). RNS will consider providing match funding as part of an E2G proposal where the other agency's funding is essential to the success of a research project.

**Milestone:** A significant, measurable event, checkpoint, or achievement that marks progress in a project. A milestone should be verifiable (connected to completion of specific measurable activities) and tied to a specific timeframe.

**Outcome:** The change, benefit or improvement that accrues outside the research system as a result of research outputs.

**Outputs:** The tangible, direct results, and/or products of a research project.

**Research provider:** An organization whose primary role is to design, conduct and supply research. It gathers data, analyses it, and delivers findings for application by the end user.

**Sector objectives:** The specific goals defined by the Nova Scotia Minister of Advanced Education for each of the [three priority sectors](#) Research Nova Scotia is focused on.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

**Ear to the Ground (E2G)** supports shorter-term, agile projects that are responsive to emerging needs and opportunities, within the parameters of the priority sectors.

**Key characteristics include:**

- Shorter-term (less than three years) to realize outcomes
- Support for individual projects with a smaller scope
- Focus on end user-informed research outcomes
- Designed for both early-stage R&D projects or more advanced stage R&D projects. See [Eligibility](#) section below for further detail.
- Undertaken by an existing research provider
- RNS may be sole or partial funder

---

## KEY RESOURCES

Before you begin your proposal submission, review the following resources in addition to this guide:

1. The [RNS web page about the E2G opportunity](#).
2. RNS' new [strategy](#).
3. The information on the [priority sectors](#) and [sector objectives](#) defined by the provincial government.
4. The recording of the [E2G information webinar](#).
5. The **timeline** for the competition.

If you have questions or concerns following a review of this material, consult with RNS support staff **before** the submission deadline. RNS staff can be contacted at [apply@researchns.ca](mailto:apply@researchns.ca).

## ELIGIBILITY

The project and applicant eligibility requirements for the **Ear to the Ground (E2G) Research Investments** opportunity are summarized in this section for you to reference as you complete your submission. Familiarize yourself with all requirements and be sure to check your answers against these as you navigate through the stages of your proposal.

---

### PROJECT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for funding, the proposed research project must meet all criteria below:

1. Align with at least **one** of the **seven economic outcomes** defined in RNS strategic plan
2. Align with at least **one** of the **three priority sectors**
3. Address at least **one** of the **sector objectives** within the sector of alignment
4. Demonstrate a credible **pathway to impact** within Nova Scotia (through adoption, commercialization, or measurable system improvement, for example)
5. Fall into **one of the following stages** of development/readiness:
  - early-stage R&D projects that are high-potential but are too early or high-risk to secure traditional investor financing (private, public or philanthropic)
  - more advanced stage R&D projects that require the contribution of research providers to develop the invention or innovation for market
6. Meet the RNS **definition of research**

---

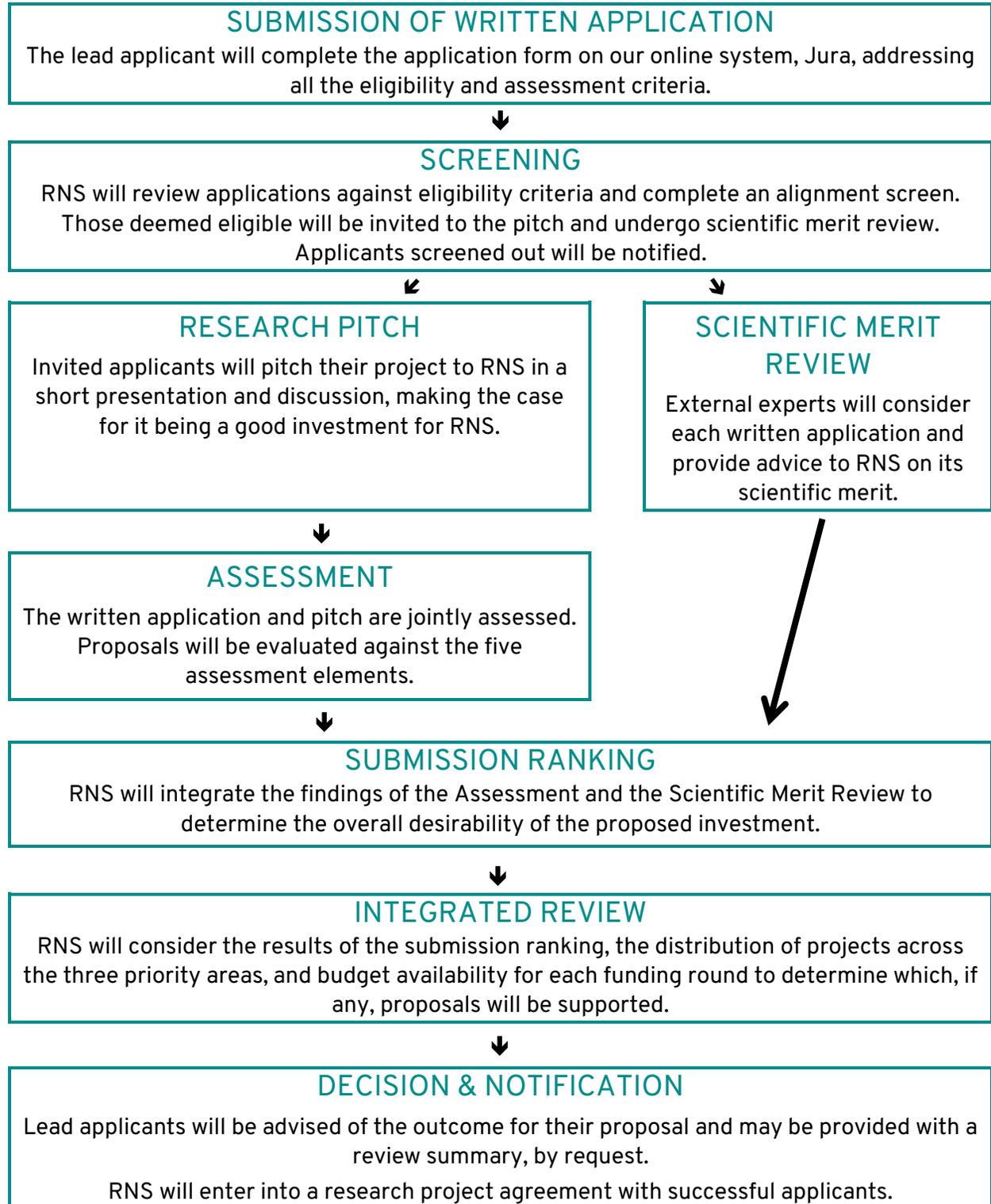
### APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

To be an eligible applicant for funding, applicants and host organizations must meet all the following criteria:

1. **Host organization** must be a **Nova Scotian** entity (private, public, or non-profit)
2. Must include participation of an **independent research provider**, such as the post-secondary sector, non-profit research organization, publicly funded research organization, or private sector research organization
3. The primary applicant must demonstrate commitment to high-quality research and have a history of **research productivity**
4. The primary applicant must be **based in Nova Scotia**

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS

E2G proposals will be assessed following the process summarized below.



## ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Your Ear to the Ground (E2G) proposal consists of **two** components, both of which form the full submission to RNS.

1. **Stage 1 - Written Application:** The written application is the formal submission provided to RNS through the Jura portal. It presents the proposed research project, outlines its goals, and demonstrates how the work is expected to contribute to the purpose and intended outcomes of the Ear to the Ground (E2G) program.
2. **Stage 2 - Research Pitch:** The pitch provides invited applicants with an opportunity to explain why their proposal represents a strong strategic investment for Nova Scotia. The audience will be scientific generalists who are very familiar with the written application. Use the pitch to highlight the proposal's most important elements, strengthen context, and demonstrate why your project is the right investment for this round.

---

## SCREENING

### ITEMS ASSESSED

- Written application

### ELEMENTS OF THE SCREENING

The screening step will consist of two pieces: an eligibility check and an alignment screen.

The eligibility check will verify that the application meets the program's basic requirements including applicant and host organization eligibility, completeness of the submitted application, and budget and duration compliance.

Applications will also be screened at a high level for their **alignment with Nova Scotia's priority sectors**, the strength of their anticipated **contribution to provincial economic growth**, their **fit with the RNS definition of research** and the **inclusion of relevant end users**.

### OUTCOME

Applications that meet the screening requirements will be invited to Stage 2 - Research Pitch and the written application will be sent for Assessment and Scientific Merit Review.

Applicants not moving forward will be notified at this stage.

---

## ASSESSMENT

### ITEMS ASSESSED

- Written application
- Research pitch

### ELEMENTS OF ASSESSMENT

During this stage, both the written application and the research pitch are assessed. This assessment occurs in parallel with the Scientific Merit Review.

Proposals will be evaluated against five assessment elements in the RNS Strategic Plan. RNS will select investments based on the [Act, Regulations](#), and [Ministerial Priorities](#) based on the following criteria:

1. **Purpose & Pathway to Implementation**: Expected contribution to economic growth and to outcomes within the priority sectors.
2. **Demand-Side Interest**: Evidence that end users have informed the proposed work and intend to use its results.
3. **Value of the Work**: Relative value of the investment, including cost–benefit considerations compared with other proposals.
4. **Saliency**: Likelihood that research outputs will be produced in a form and timeframe that supports end user uptake.
5. **Capacity to Deliver**: Demonstrated capability of the research provider and team to manage the project and achieve proposed outputs.

As outlined in [Appendix 1](#), each element is broken into specific components. Criteria will be assessed as:

- **Excellent**: The approach is exceptional and impressive; thoughtfully and completely developed with no concerns or missing information. Nothing of any consequence should be changed.
- **Good/sufficient**: There are no significant gaps or concerns, however minor questions or ambiguities may remain. Minimum requirements have been met.
- **Poor**: Significant concerns, gaps or inconsistencies exist. Confidence in the approach is in question.

Where RNS is uncertain of any part of this assessment, RNS may reach out to individual teams to clarify ambiguity, but not to address gaps or incomplete information.

### OUTCOME

The outcome of this stage is a consolidated evaluation—drawing on both the written application and pitch—that identifies the proposals best positioned for further consideration in the Submission Ranking.

---

## SCIENTIFIC MERIT REVIEW

### ITEMS ASSESSED

- Written application

### ELEMENTS OF REVIEW

Scientific merit is the sound design and methodology of a research application, the evaluation of which is done by knowledgeable and objective experts. RNS requires that all proposals are reviewed by subject matter experts before a decision on support can be made. This review occurs in parallel with the Assessment.

Reviewers will evaluate the applications against the criteria outlined in [Appendix 2](#), using the same Excellent-Good/sufficient-Poor scale described in the Assessment. Reviewers may also provide additional written comments on individual elements and the application overall.

The Scientific Merit Review does not evaluate whether an E2G proposal should go forward, but whether the scientific quality embedded within the application meets a quality standard appropriate for its field.

Merit reviewers are selected based on their capability to fully and fairly review the application.

For E2G proposals that involve Indigenous peoples or communities, RNS will work in partnership with the applicants to ensure this assessment is modified as appropriate to ensure consistency with [TCPS 2 \(2022\)](#), 'Research Involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada' and the principles of [OCAP](#).

### OUTCOME

The Scientific Merit Review determines whether the application's research design, methods, and scholarly approach meet the disciplinary standards necessary to remain eligible for funding consideration.

---

## SUBMISSION RANKING

This portion of the assessment process brings together the results of both the Assessment and the Scientific Merit Review to form an overall evaluation of the proposal. At this stage, RNS will review the evidence, strengths, and risks identified across all assessment elements to determine the desirability of the potential investment.

---

## INTEGRATED REVIEW

The final adjudication stage will consider the options of all assessment stages and evaluate the **strategic value of the investment** in the context of this funding round. Assessments will consider not only the quality and ambition of each proposal, but also the overall balance across priority sectors, geographic regions, institutions, and EDIA considerations.

RNS may engage further with teams at this stage prior to final selection.

---

## FEEDBACK TO APPLICANTS

On request, teams will be provided with an anonymized review summary.

## PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals for E2G are completed in two stages: (1) a written application and (2) if selected to proceed, a research pitch.

Written applications are completed and submitted through Research Nova Scotia's online portal, [Jura](#). Before beginning your application, you must have a **Jura account** with a completed **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) self-declaration**. See the [Key Documents](#) section of the [E2G webpage](#) for specific instructions on how to complete these steps.

To apply, you must:

- In Stage 1:
  - Complete and submit the written application through the online portal between the published open and close dates
  - Provide all the information requested
  - Address all eligibility and evaluation criteria
  - Ensure your host organization has reviewed and signed off on your application before the deadline
- In Stage 2:
  - If selected to proceed, attend a meeting with Research Nova Scotia to present a research pitch and engage in discussion about your project

## STAGE 1: WRITTEN APPLICATION

The first stage of the proposal process is a written application submitted through Jura. The information required in each section is detailed below.

---

### SUMMARY PROJECT & APPLICANT INFORMATION

---

#### APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name, contact information and the organization with which you are affiliated. Notify RNS if any information needs to be updated.

Any correspondence about your proposal will be sent by email.

---

#### HOST ORGANIZATION

Organization that will be receiving and administering the fund. This may be different from the organization with which you are affiliated in the Jura system.

An organizational contact with signing authority (if different than the applicant) will review and sign-off on your application before submission. This sign-off must be received before the E2G submission deadline.

---

#### PROPOSAL TITLE

A descriptive but concise title for your research project.

---

#### OVERVIEW

A succinct overview of your proposed research and how it could support economic growth and productivity in Nova Scotia, addressing all the topics below. Your response should convince Research Nova Scotia (RNS) and reviewers that your project represents a needed and worthwhile investment for RNS and meets all the eligibility requirements.

Your overview must be a **maximum of 2000 words in length**. Your response may be in whatever format and/or order works best for communicating the importance and impact of your research.

1. High-Level Concept: Summarize your project in one sentence (e.g., “We are developing X to help Y achieve Z”).
2. End Users: Identify who wants or needs this research to be completed, including the specific individuals, companies, or industries in Nova Scotia that would benefit from the results of your research. Describe how you have already engaged with these end users and explain how your research was informed and strengthened by input from end users and how they

will use the outcomes of your research. **NOTE:** The end user(s) of your research **cannot** be another researcher.

3. **Problem & Solution:** Briefly describe the problem your research aims to solve and why it matters to Nova Scotia. Be specific about the challenge and clearly explain how your project will contribute to achieving one or more of the [sector objectives](#). Describe your research-based innovation, intervention, or approach and explain how it addresses the identified problem. State the impact your research would have on Nova Scotia if successful.

---

## DETAILS

---

### RESEARCH DESIGN

Describe how you will carry out the project research, including your research design, methods, processes, and key activities. Your research design summary should include:

- Research question(s)
- Planned methodology, including key design elements, data collection methods, data analysis techniques to be used
- Justifications for why specific methods were chosen and any ethical considerations
- Anticipated challenges and how they will be addressed
- Success measures – how you will know if the project is successful and any metrics you will use for determining success

The research design summary should be a **maximum of 1500 words**.

---

### WORKPLAN

Upload a workplan establishing clear [milestones](#) for your project and outlining the key activities, timelines, resources, and responsibilities needed to achieve each specific milestone along with the expected deliverables for each milestone. It should provide a clear roadmap for how your project activities will allow you to meet sector objectives within the proposed timeframe and budget.

The workplan document may be formatted in whatever way you feel best fits the scope, timeline and milestones of your project but should be easily understood by those without specific knowledge of your area of expertise. The document type must be **PDF** for the upload.

---

## RESULTS DISTRIBUTION PLAN

Upload a results distribution plan outlining how you will facilitate the uptake and sharing of the output(s) of this project by [end users](#). Detail your plan to move evidence into action and what methods you plan to use to convey results to and engage end users. Your plan should include:

- Who the end users are
- What activities/methods will be used to convey the results to these end users
- The resources needed to implement the plan
- How you plan to measure success of your efforts
- A timeline for implementing the results distribution

The results distribution plan should be a **maximum of 500 words**. The document must be in **PDF format** for the upload.

---

## REVENUE STREAMS

In table format, list all anticipated sources of revenue (if any) including both cash and in-kind contributions and indicate whether each source is confirmed or expected. Examples of other funding sources include:

- Institutional or organizational contributions
- Industry or community partner funding
- Federal or provincial grants and programs
- In-kind support such as staff time, equipment uses, or materials provided at no cost

**NOTE:** If you plan to use a portion of your E2G award to leverage additional funds from Mitacs, please be sure to include the expected contribution from Mitacs in this table.

---

## PROJECTED COSTS

In table format, provide a breakdown of anticipated project costs you propose to have covered by Research Nova Scotia funds by cost category, and by year, up to **maximum of \$500,000, over 6 to 36 months**. The table should detail how the funds will be allocated to achieve the sector objective(s), project milestones and expected outcomes.

**NOTES:** If your project is 6 months or 1 year in duration and will not have costs in Year 2 or 3, enter 0 (zero) when completing the table in Jura.

If you intend to leverage additional Mitacs funding, list the Mitacs contribution as a separate budget line item from other personnel costs and ensure 7% tax is included in your calculation.

Refer to the RNS Funding Policies below for details on eligible and ineligible expenses and acceptable use of funds:

- [4.3 Eligible Research Expenses](#)
- [3.8 Indirect Costs](#)

---

## MATCH FUNDING

If your application for funding anticipates matching another research funder (e.g. CFI), **indicate ‘Yes’ and upload a copy of the application to the other funder**. If your application to the other funder was successful, **provide any related review documents and the decision letter** as uploads.

If you do not yet have a decision, let us know when you anticipate receiving a decision from the other funder by providing an estimated date. ***NOTE: This field in Jura requires Day, Month, and Year, however, as this is an estimated date and RNS will only look at the month and year.***

If you are **not planning to leverage funding** from another funding agency, **answer ‘No’** and no further information is required.

---

## TEAM MEMBERS

Using the Team Member table provided, list all team members, including yourself as the primary applicant, who will be involved with your research project. Enter each team member name, title, the organization with which they are affiliated and their role on the project.

---

## TEAM COMPOSITION

Briefly describe the project team, highlighting their roles, relevant experience, and key capabilities of each member. The information provided should demonstrate the ability of the project team to successfully execute the project and achieve the expected outcomes and demonstrate that all required elements to undertake the project work are in place.

The team composition summary should be a **maximum of 500 words**.

---

## SUPPORTING MATERIALS

You may provide additional supporting documentation (e.g. appendices, bibliographies, end notes etc.), if desired. Name each document with a clear reference to the type of document being provided and upload them in **PDF format**.

## STAGE 2: RESEARCH PITCH

Applicants who are shortlisted based on their written application will be invited to participate in the second stage of the proposal process: a **research pitch**. Discussions will be scheduled with Research Nova Scotia for each applicant selected to move on to this stage.

---

### PURPOSE

The pitch provides an opportunity to explain why your proposal represents a strong strategic investment for Nova Scotia. It is not part of the scientific merit review, and the audience will be scientific generalists who are very familiar with your written application.

Be an advocate for your project and use the pitch to highlight your proposal's most important elements, strengthen context, and demonstrate why your project is the right investment for this round. Do not repeat or summarize the written application.

The pitch also allows for discussion of your research proposal and provides a chance for RNS to ask tailored questions and gather information that allows us to better understand your research project and its potential impact on Nova Scotia. It is also an opportunity for you to share any additional pertinent information that Research Nova Scotia should know.

---

### FORMAT

Discussion meetings will be held **virtually**.

PowerPoints or slide decks will **not** be required.

Each discussion will be about **20 minutes** in total; a 5-minute presentation followed by discussion.

---

### SCHEDULING

Research pitches will occur after written applications are screened for eligibility. Pitches will be scheduled during the following period: February 23 – March 13, 2026.

---

### ACCESSIBILITY & ACCOMMODATIONS

Research Nova Scotia is committed to providing an accessible and inclusive assessment process. If you require any accommodation to participate in the research pitch, please specify your needs on the provided section in the written application. RNS will do its best to accommodate, wherever possible.

## APPENDIX 1: ASSESSMENT – PROGRAM ELEMENTS

### ELEMENT I: PURPOSE & PATHWAY TO IMPLEMENTATION

**DEFINITION:** Expected contribution to economic growth and to outcomes within the priority sectors.

**COMPONENTS:**

- Clearly articulates the purpose of the proposed research and the problem it is aiming to solve.
- Demonstrates a credible, evidence-informed pathway to implementation that would contribute to the province’s economic growth agenda.
- Clearly identifies which sector objectives are being addressed and provides a compelling case for why this research requires RNS investment at this time.

### ELEMENT II: DEMAND-SIDE INTEREST

**DEFINITION:** Evidence that end users have informed the proposed work and intend to use its results.

**COMPONENTS:**

- Demonstrates awareness of sector, industry, or policy demand for outcomes.
- Provides evidence that end users informed project design and articulated their needs.

### ELEMENT III: VALUE OF WORK

**DEFINITION:** Relative value of the investment, including cost-benefit considerations compared with other proposals.

**COMPONENTS:**

- Provides clear compelling rationale for requested funding relative to anticipated outcomes and value-for-money justification.
- Demonstrates scalability or potential to attract further investment or partner funding (e.g., private investment, commercialization, policy impact).
- Quantifies and identifies mechanisms for capturing expected returns (jobs, investment leverage, new products/services, export growth, etc.) for the immediate and long-term future in Nova Scotia

## ELEMENT IV: SALIENCE

**DEFINITION:** Likelihood that research outputs will be produced in a form and timeframe that supports end user uptake.

### COMPONENTS:

- Outlines mechanisms for ongoing collaboration or feedback and a convincing plan for how end users will use the results of the research.
- Identifies potential barriers to adoption and plans to address them.
- Timeline supports near- to medium-term application to meet the needs of end users.

## ELEMENT V: CAPACITY TO DELIVER

**DEFINITION:** Demonstrated capability of the research provider and team to manage the project and achieve proposed outputs.

### COMPONENTS:

- Team members have demonstrated expertise relevant to the work.
- Realistic workplan, timelines, and resource allocation, including a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. There is evidence of institutional supports needed to execute the research.
- Appropriate risk management and contingency planning evident.
- Required elements to undertake the proposal work are in place.

## APPENDIX 2: SCIENTIFIC MERIT REVIEW

### ELEMENT VI: SCIENTIFIC QUALITY

**DEFINITION:** Research meets expected quality standards.

**COMPONENTS:**

- The proposal meets the RNS definition of research, as described in the strategic plan and three-year operating plan.
- Clear, well-structured design grounded in sound scientific or scholarly principles that employs an appropriate theoretical approach.
- The project is feasible within the proposed timeline and budget using the methods described.
- The proposed approach is likely to yield valid, useful, and actionable results that can inform implementation or uptake by end users.
- Research risks are identified, with mitigation strategies in place.