



Project Submission Guidelines for Funding in 2023–2024

ACA Research Grants

At **Alberta Conservation Association (ACA)**, we believe it is our responsibility to join and support the collective effort to conserve, protect and enhance Alberta's fish, wildlife and habitat. In addition to delivering conservation programs throughout the province, we administer a fund that has been awarding conservation grants since 1997. Funded by the province's anglers, hunters and other conservationists, ACA's Grants program supports projects that benefit Alberta's wildlife and fish populations, and the habitat they depend on.

ACA is proud to enter into its **26th year** of Conservation Funding. Project funding will be available via the **ACA Research Grants** during the 2023-24 funding cycle.

These Guidelines contain information to help you apply for funding from the ACA Research Grants.

- Section 1: About the ACA Research Grants**
- Section 2: Funding Eligibility**
- Section 3: Major Funding Priorities 2023 – 2024**
- Section 4: Application Instructions**
- Section 5: Grant Application Screening & Decision Process**

IMPORTANT: Please read the Guidelines carefully and ensure you are using the correct application form.

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Section 1:

About the ACA Research Grants

The **ACA Grants Program** aims to aid Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) in the delivery of its mission. Grants made to partners are intended to enhance and supplement ACA activities.

ACA Research Grants fund high quality research projects on wildlife, fish and habitat which inform the effective management of wildlife, and fish populations, and their habitat **in Alberta**.

Who Can Apply?

Anyone qualified to conduct high-quality research can apply if they have a suitable research project, with the exception of Federal or Provincial Government employees and ACA staff. Graduate student and post-doc projects have to be submitted by the project supervisor (i.e., faculty member). A graduate student can, however, apply directly to the ACA Grants in Biodiversity; this is often a better option for graduate student projects, due to the level of competition in the ACA Research Grants. You cannot apply with the same project to both the ACA Research Grants and ACA Grants in Biodiversity.

ACA does not fund applications where the Federal or Provincial Government employee is the principal investigator / researcher (Principal Investigator is considered the lead on a project) or the principal investigator / researcher is a Federal or Provincial Ministry. Federal or Provincial Government employees may be part of the project but must not be responsible for the majority of the project. If your primary position is with the Federal or Provincial Government, you cannot apply from another organization. Applicants already receiving funding through ACA (e.g., ACA IPS NSERC contributions, ACA Grants in Biodiversity, etc.), normally will not be provided funds through this granting process.

Anyone engaged in the activities outlined in the “Grounds for Disqualification” outlined on ACA’s Grants website are not eligible to apply for an ACA grant.

Successful applicants will be expected to follow the ACA Cooperative Project Agreement, which includes the requirement to submit two reports to ACA (a copy of the Cooperative Project Agreement can be requested from the ACA Grants Project Administrator). *Please check that your organization is willing to sign our Cooperative Project Agreement before applying.*

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How to Apply?

Read the *Project Submission Guidelines* carefully to determine if your project is eligible for funding prior to preparing a formal submission to ACA.

Download the ACA Research Grant application form and submit your application by e-mailing it to ACA between November 1 and December 1, 2022. Ensure that all sections of the application are complete, clear, and thorough. *Please do not append supporting documents, as these are not used in the review process.*

Please contact Amy MacKiven by telephone **Toll-Free on 1-877-722-4323** or by email amy.mackiven@ab-conservation.com, if you have any questions regarding your application to ACA Grants program.

Where to Apply?

Submit completed **ACA Research Grants** applications by email to:
amy.mackiven@ab-conservation.com

In an effort to reduce paper consumption, we appreciate your cooperation in providing your completed application electronically. However, if you do not have access to the internet, please send a hard copy application to:

Alberta Conservation Association,
Attention: ACA Grants Administrator,
#101, 9 Chippewa Road,
Sherwood Park, AB, T8A 6J7

IMPORTANT NOTICE: upon receiving your application, we will send you an acknowledgment receipt by e-mail within five business days. It is your responsibility to contact ACA Grants Administrator if you have not received acknowledgement of receipt, as the application may not have been received in good order.

When to Apply?

ACA will receive applications for the ACA Research Grants from November 1 to December 1, 2022 for funding consideration in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Applications received after **16:30 local time on Thursday, December 1, 2022** will not be accepted.

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Section 2: Funding Eligibility

ACA Research Grants are available for:

- Research projects that meet and further the ACA mission:
ACA conserves, protects and enhances fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for Albertans to enjoy, value, and use.
- Projects that contribute to the priorities as outlined in Section 3: Funding Priorities.
- Priority is given to projects that demonstrate a “self-help” attitude, i.e., partner contributions, matched funding dollars, and public involvement.
- Research projects that clearly meet ACA funding criteria and demonstrate initiatives that have a wider relevance and further the practice of conservation.

ACA Research Grants are NOT available for:

- Projects outside of Alberta.
- ACA and Federal and Provincial Government employee projects. See section Who Can Apply?
- Grants are not normally offered towards profit-making activities
- Overhead costs
- Emergency funds or deficit financing
- Travel to conferences and seminars, unless part of a larger project supported by ACA
- General fundraising

Important Granting Information:

- Successful applicants will be expected to follow the ACA Cooperative Project Agreement (a copy can be requested from the ACA Grants Administrator) and adhere to the reporting schedule identified in Cooperative Project Agreement.
- Please note the 2023/24 ACA Cooperative Project Agreement contains the following clause, by applying to the ACA Research Grants you are agreeing to this clause. **“Pandemic:** *ACA believes we have the financial stability to weather any future pandemic related crisis and we continue to fund a wide range of conservation related projects. However, owing to the potentially rapidly changing environment, as observed with COVID 19, there is the possibility that in the future ACA may find itself in a situation where significant cost cutting must occur in order to ensure the long-term viability of the organization. By accepting this Cooperative Project Agreement, the Recipient acknowledges and accepts that, due to a pandemic crisis, funding may be terminated with 30-days notice. All expense incurred as part of the project as of the date of the termination will be covered by ACA. ACA will make all reasonable effort to avoid having to terminate funding.”*

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- Payment of grants is normally made in three payments. *Please note the initial payment can be delayed, due to time it takes to sign and process new Cooperative Project Agreements; applicants should be aware that first grant payments will not be made before June.*
- Project activities **must** occur between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024.
- If this is a request for repeat funding from ACA and your current 2022-23 project will not be completed as of March 31, 2023, you should extend your current project by contacting the ACA Grants Coordinator rather than reapplying for the same project in 2023-24.
- Approved open access publication costs can be claimed from ACA up to five years from April 1, 2023.
- Open access publishing is now a requirement of the ACA Research Grants.
- Grants cannot be made retrospectively, that is for work started prior to the current fiscal year, i.e., before April 1, 2023.
- ACA may charge an administration fee for any monies held in trust.
- Capital equipment purchases in excess of \$500 may remain the property of ACA upon project completion.
- Your information will be used only for the purpose for which it was originally collected, and it will be disclosed only on a strict “need-to-know” basis. Be assured that we manage the information contained in your submission in manner commensurate with its sensitivity.
- Applicants are responsible for ensuring they have the proper licenses and approvals required to carry out the project and have complied with all the requirements of their organization, such as signature pages, animal care, human ethics requirements, etc.

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Section 3:

Major Funding Priorities for Research 2023 – 2024

All applicants to the ACA Research Grants should be aware that this grant is fully funded by the hunters and anglers of Alberta. All proposals should be able to demonstrate how the proposed project will aid ACA in meeting its mission of conserving, protecting, and enhancing wildlife, fish, and habitat for all Albertans to enjoy, value, and use. To help direct potential applicants the following list of priority areas has been developed. While the ACA Research Grants will accept applications that do not relate to these suggested areas, projects that address one or more of these priority areas will have a higher probability of being funded than those that do not.

1. Research activities specifically listed on provincial recovery plans for Alberta's *Endangered* species (to be done in cooperation with recovery teams). (See: www.alberta.ca/species-at-risk-resources.aspx).
2. Evaluate the impacts of non-native species on the persistence of native species.
3. Develop and validate inventory tools to determine the relative density and range of wildlife and fish species using innovative detection technologies (e.g., DNA/eDNA, camera traps, and drones).
4. Evaluate the effect of agricultural runoff, pesticides, herbicides, or pharmaceuticals on fish or wildlife species' food availability and/or quality in agricultural landscapes.
5. Evaluate the effect of recreational access (mode, timing, and duration) on wildlife and fish populations, and habitat.
6. Investigate methods to reduce the spread and/or impact of wildlife- or fish-related diseases.
7. Evaluate the impact of various harvest management regimes on fish or wildlife genetics or demography (e.g., fish size limits, and three-point or larger elk requirements).
8. Support social science studies of hunting and angling related to demography, attitudes, norms, and practices.
9. Evaluate the effect of biological solutions of carbon sequestration on grasslands and treed lands.
10. Evaluate approaches for improving the abundance of pollinators in agricultural landscapes.
11. Work toward clarifying status of formally designated data deficient species.
12. Demonstrate the efficacy of alternative wetland restoration and mitigation techniques.

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Section 4:

Application Instructions:

Most of the application form is self-explanatory, however some additional notes have been provided to help you with completing the application form. **The format provided must be used. A maximum page limit of 14 pages has been introduced for ACA Research Grant applications (excluding the cover page and FOIPP page, please use a legible font size, i.e., nothing smaller than Arial size 11).** Keep in mind that long-winded applications can be tiring for reviewers to read through. All the text boxes expand. Do NOT append supplementary information, e.g., resumes, publications, etc.

Who and How much?

Anyone qualified to carry out high quality research can apply via their organization, with the following exceptions: ACA and Federal & Provincial Government employees (see section Who Can Apply?). Students and post-docs must apply under their supervisor's name (faculty staff). Graduate students can apply directly to the ACA Grants in Biodiversity Program. We advise that student projects go the ACA Grants in Biodiversity Program as they have a better chance of success. The proposal should be clear about who will be carrying out the project work, and the names of the project staff listed in the application form. See section Who Can Apply?

How much can be applied for? There is no maximum specified, but special justification would be expected if over \$40,000 was requested. The average grant awarded last year was approximately \$27,500.

Project type?

Surveys, monitoring, and simple taxonomy that are not clearly linked to conservation value or the specified Priorities for the year will not be highly ranked, depending on the research content.

Previous funding from ACA

If this is a request for repeat funding from ACA, make sure you demonstrate evidence that you have made progress with your project, e.g., preliminary results, publications, and justify why another year of funding is necessary to the project. There is a box provided in the application form for this.

If your 2022-23 project will not be completed as of March 31, 2023, you should extend your current project by contacting the ACA Grants Coordinator rather than reapplying for the same project in 2023-24.

Link with ACA

Be specific as to which funding priority or funding priorities (listed in previous section) your project addresses and describe the link. If your project doesn't address one of the funding priorities, make sure you demonstrate how your project will support ACA's mission, **ACA conserves, protects, and enhances fish, wildlife and habitat for all Albertans to enjoy, value and use.**

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The grant money is generated through the fishing and hunting license fees collected in Alberta; therefore, we ask you to explain how your project will benefit hunters, anglers or trappers in Alberta.

Open Access Publications

Following the lead of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Council of Canada, ACA has adopted a new guideline with respect to publication of results related to ACA funded grants. Grant recipients are encouraged to ensure that any peer-reviewed journal publications arising from ACA-supported research are freely accessible within 12 months of publication. Two options are available to recipients:

a. **Online Repositories**

Grant recipients can deposit their final, peer-reviewed manuscript into an institutional or disciplinary repository that will make the manuscript freely accessible within 12 months of publication. It is the responsibility of the grant recipient to determine which publishers allow authors to retain copyright and/or allow authors to archive journal publications in accordance with funding agency policies.

b. **Journals**

Grant recipients can publish in a journal that offers immediate open access or that offers open access on its website within 12 months. Some journals require authors to pay article processing charges to make manuscripts freely available upon publication. The cost of publishing in open access journals is now an eligible expense under ACA granting guidelines. Up to \$3,000 may be identified specifically for publication in open access journals, in any grant application. The funds identified in any successful grant application for open access journal publication will be held by ACA for a period of five years from the date of initial grant approval. During the five-year period the recipient may apply to ACA for release of the publication funds, once recipient provides confirmation that the research has been accepted in an eligible journal.

Grant recipients should be aware that starting in 2021, this guideline will become a standard requirement in all granting agreements. **Failure to comply with this requirement will disqualify researchers from eligibility to apply in subsequent years.**

Budget Notes

Try to match your budget items as closely to the system used by your Research Services Office. For example, list fuel under Materials and Supplies rather than travel if that is how your RSO will report it. ACA expects funding requested will be spent as close to the budget as possible, however it is within the grant recipient's discretion to move funds to different categories as long as the overall objectives of the project are achieved.

Contract Services: Mention in the budget commentary section who will be contracted for the services required and provide a breakdown of the payment, e.g., cost per sample, rate per hour.

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Travel: The maximum allowed mileage is based on current CRA Rates. Please include the mileage rate if different than the current CRA Rate. Travel expenses within Alberta are eligible expenses, **but travel expenses from outside Alberta are ineligible, e.g., flights to Alberta from outside Alberta.**

Travel to conferences and seminars are ineligible for funding, unless part of a larger project supported by ACA.

Honoraria: Provide a breakdown for any honoraria, e.g., amount per volunteer.

Capital Assets: Items > \$500 that can be reused on other projects. Capital assets may remain the property of ACA upon project completion.

Publication costs: A maximum of \$3,000 can be requested for costs associated with publishing in open-access journals. These funds will be held by ACA for a period of five years from the start date of grant.

Other: Overhead costs or unforeseen/contingency budget lines are not eligible under the ACA Research Grants. We consider office rental, office bills, etc. as overhead expenses.

Partner Funding: Be sure to itemize partner funding dollars and public involvement in your proposed project in the appropriate boxes. Projects which have no partner or matching funding will benefit from an explanation as to why they don't have any.

Project Review

Referees: ACA Research Grants applications go through a rigorous academic review procedure, which means your application will be read by other experts in the field of your proposed project. To aid this process we are asking for your input into suitable referees for your proposal. These referees may or may not be used.

The suggested referees should be at arm's-length from the applicant and the proposed research. Suggested referees should not be people you have published with, or in your research group. Please provide the names and complete mailing and email addresses of at least four individuals who could provide an independent assessment of the proposal. Telephone numbers are appreciated.

Suggested referees cannot be a former (within the last three years), or present, research collaborator of the applicant; or a departmental colleague of the applicant who is working in the same field as the applicant. You may include someone from your department if they meet the arm's length criteria.

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Section 5:

ACA Research Grants Application Screening & Decision Process:

ACA receives funding requests far in excess of our financial resources and often must decline funding to worthy projects and programs. This does not in any way reflect the value of the organization/individual involved.

The ACA Board of Directors appoints a Review Panel of six (6) to eight (8) individuals with research expertise. The Review Panel will recommend funding decisions to the ACA Board. The Review Panel chair is appointed by the ACA Board. The panel includes at least three academic researchers representing Alberta Universities, and at least three individuals with substantial research experience from the non-profit, governmental sector and/or industry. Please do not send supporting documents. *Supporting documents submitted with grant applications are not circulated to the Review Panel members.*

Applicants will be notified of status of their submission by March 31, 2023. Successful grant applicants will be expected to follow the ACA Cooperative Project Agreement.

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