



ACA Research Grants Submission Guidelines 2025–2026

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 28th year of Conservation Funding. Project funding will be available via the **ACA Research Grants (RG)** during the 2025-26 funding cycle.

These Guidelines provide the eligibility criteria and application information you need to apply to the ACA RG for a project to take place between April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026. You are strongly encouraged to read these Guidelines in full before submitting your application.

- Section 1: About the ACA Research Grants
- Section 2: Eligibility
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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**.

Section 2:

Funding Eligibility

Who Can Apply?

Anyone qualified to conduct high-quality research (with the appropriate insurance) 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 must 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.

ACA administers multiple granting streams. **A project may only apply to one of ACA's granting streams.** Projects already receiving funding through an ACA grant, will normally not be provided additional grant funds.

Anyone engaged in the activities outlined in the "Grounds for Disqualification" outlined on ACA's Grants website here <https://www.ab-conservation.com/grants-program/grounds-for-disqualification/> 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 found on ACA's website here: <https://www.ab-conservation.com/grants-program/aca-research-grants/applicant-information/>). Please check that your organization is willing to sign our Cooperative Project Agreement before applying.

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 4: Funding Priorities 2025-26.
- 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 previous 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 sample can be found on ACA’s website here: <https://www.ab-conservation.com/grants-program/aca-research-grants/applicant-information/>) and adhere to the reporting schedule identified in Cooperative Project Agreement.
- The grants are normally paid in three equal payments. The initial payment is made upon signing the Cooperative Project Agreement, the interim payment is made upon approval of the interim report due Sept. 1st, and the final payment is a hold back paid on approval of the final report due Mar. 15th of the term year.
- *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, 2025 and March 31, 2026.
- If this is a request for repeat funding from ACA and your current 2024-25 project will not be completed as of March 31, 2025, you should extend your current project by contacting the ACA Grants Coordinator rather than reapplying for the same project in 2025-26.
- Open access publishing is now a requirement of the ACA Research Grants.
- Approved open access publication costs can be claimed from ACA up to five years from April 1, 2025.

- Grants cannot be made retrospectively, that is for work started prior to the current fiscal year, i.e., before April 1, 2025.
- 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 insurance, licences, 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.

Section 3:

How and When to Apply?

Read this document 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 here: <https://www.ab-conservation.com/grants-program/aca-research-grants/applicant-information/>

Complete the Application Form, noting the following:

- Ensure that all sections of the application are complete, clear, and thorough. The format provided must be used. Additional guidance on filling in the application form is provided in Section 5.
- **Do not append supporting documents**, as these are not used in the review process.
- There is a **maximum page limit of 14 pages** 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.

Please contact Amy MacKinven by telephone toll-free on **1-877-722- 4323** or by email amy.mackinven@ab-conservation.com, if you have any questions regarding your application to the ACA RG.

Submit your application by e-mailing it to ACA (amy.mackinven@ab-conservation.com) between **November 1, 2024 and November 29, 2024** before the deadline **Friday, November 29, 2024, 4:30pm MST**. Applications emailed after November 29, 2024, 4:30 pm MST will not be accepted.

ENSURE YOUR APPLICATION IS ACKNOWLEDGED: upon receiving your application, ACA will email you an acknowledgement receipt within five business days. **It is your responsibility to contact the ACA Grants Coordinator if you have not received acknowledgement of receipt within 5 business days**, as the application may not have been received in good order.

Section 4:

Major Funding Priorities for Research 2025 – 2026

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.

- A. 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).
- B. Evaluate the impacts of non-native species on the persistence of native species.
- C. 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).
- D. Evaluate the effect of agricultural runoff, pesticides, herbicides, or pharmaceuticals on fish or wildlife species' food availability and/or quality in agricultural landscapes.
- E. Evaluate the effect of recreational access (mode, timing, and duration) on wildlife and fish populations, and habitat.
- F. Investigate methods to reduce the spread and/or impact of wildlife- or fish-related diseases.
- G. 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).
- H. Support social science studies of hunting and angling related to demography, attitudes, norms, and practices.
- I. Evaluate the effect of biological solutions of carbon sequestration on grasslands and treed lands.
- J. Evaluate approaches for improving the abundance of pollinators in agricultural landscapes.
- K. Work toward clarifying status of formally designated data deficient species.
- L. Demonstrate the efficacy of alternative wetland restoration and mitigation techniques.

Regardless of the order in which the above priorities are listed, for the purposes of project evaluation, all priorities are considered equally important.

Section 5:

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.

- All text boxes expand.
- The application template provided must be used. There is a **maximum page limit of 14 pages** for ACA RG applications (excluding the cover page and FOIPP page).
- **Use a legible font size** (i.e., nothing smaller than Arial 11 font).
- Do NOT append supplementary information other than the optional project location map (e.g., resumes or publications).
- **If you would like to submit photos, diagrams, or illustrations, please do so within the page limit**; also, please note ACA cannot guarantee the adjudicators will be viewing the applications in colour.

Organization

If the application is successful, ACA will issue the payments in the name of the organization/individual. The organization/individual must have a liability insurance policy and WCB coverage to adequately protect those involved with the funded project. For example, an application received in the name of ABC Group will be issued payment in this name, unless otherwise stipulated in the application.

How much?

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 2024-25 project will not be completed as of March 31, 2025, you should extend your current project by contacting the ACA Grants Coordinator rather than reapplying for the same project in 2025-26.

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.***

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.

Failure to comply with this requirement will disqualify researchers from eligibility to apply in subsequent years.

Intellectual Property and Data Ownership

Unless ACA staff are directly involved in the development of intellectual property, ACA claims no ownership or rights of any kind over intellectual property developed as a result of this funding. In addition, ACA claims no ownership or rights of any kind with respect to any data collected, as a result of this funding. However, by accepting this funding, the recipient agrees that the results of the project, and the raw data collected, will be made publicly available within 24 months of the funding end date, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by ACA.

If the recipient does not make the results and the raw data publicly available within the agreed to time frame, then ownership of all raw data will revert to ACA and the recipient will supply the raw data to ACA within 30 days of request from ACA. ACA will make the raw data publicly available immediately.

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.

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 and unforeseen/contingency budget lines are not eligible under the ACA Grants. Ensure the overhead waiver has been or can be obtained. We consider office rental, on-going 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.

Section 6:

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 an Adjudication Committee of six to eight individuals with research expertise. The committee 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 Adjudication Committee members.*

Applicants will be notified of the status of their submission by March 31, 2025. Successful grant applicants will be expected to follow the ACA Cooperative Project Agreement.