



DERRICK ROSSI INNOVATION AWARDS

GUIDELINES

NOTICE OF INTENT DEADLINE: Monday March 2, 2026

FULL APPLICATION DEADLINE: Monday March 30, 2026

PURPOSE

The Derrick Rossi Innovation Awards provide funding of up to \$300,000 over two (2) years to support proof-of-concept research projects focused on accelerating the implementation and/or commercialization of high potential, cutting-edge research, with the promise of significant socio-economic impacts. Awards will support research and/or commercialization activities with a focus on knowledge mobilization, deployment and implementation.

Proposals will be evaluated based on innovation, addressing a critical unmet need, potential impact, feasibility, strategic partnerships and team capability. Successful projects will have strong socio-economic or commercial potential, enabling the research or technology to make a positive impact on society.

Applicants can request up to \$300,000 per project. Applicants requesting more than \$100,000 will require strong evidence of a significant value inflection point, including the potential to attract partnerships, additional grants and the strong potential to attract additional investments (e.g. letters of support).

ELIGIBILITY

- All campus-based faculty eligible to hold research funding at the University of Toronto.
- The proposed project must be based on an existing invention or copyright disclosure **filed to the University of Toronto (U of T) Innovations & Partnerships Office (IPO) by Friday February 13th, 2026**. More information on invention disclosures and the U of T Inventions Policy can be found [here](#), and further details on copyright disclosures and the U of T Copyright Policy can be found [here](#).
- IPO highly recommends that all applicants and co-applicants complete the [U of T IP Education Program](#). The IP Education Program is an accessible free, online training program designed to equip students, faculty and staff with a broad foundation in intellectual property.
- Intellectual Property (IP) created outside the terms of the U of T Inventions or Copyright Policy are ineligible. For example, inventions or copyright created solely at U of T affiliated teaching hospitals are ineligible.
- Innovations and projects previously supported by the Connaught Innovation Award program are eligible.
- Innovations that have previously received tri-council and other competitive, peer-reviewed funding are eligible and applicants who hold these awards/grants are encouraged to apply.

- Projects are encouraged to have secured a supporting partner: this can be industry, not-for-profit, or a pilot testing site/organization.
- Projects that have a high potential impact in the areas of research, knowledge mobilization/adoption, or commercialization.

ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

Eligible expenses include:

- Salaries and benefits for students, postdocs, and technicians.
- Professional business development services, including market research, consulting fees, competitive market intelligence, business plans, legal and regulatory review. Collectively these costs are capped at \$35,000, unless approved by IPO.
- Technical and scientific services related to prototype development and testing, analysis, synthesis, machine shop, bench scale fabrication and demonstration, hardware or software design, feasibility study and technology assessment, or scale-up and preclinical evaluation services.
- Patent, Copyright or Trademarks, including services of technical experts, application, or prosecution fees. Collectively these costs are capped at \$15,000, and to be approved by IPO.
- Travel, conference, and marketing expenses related to commercializing the intellectual property. Collectively these costs are capped at \$10,000, maximum \$5,000/year.
- Research equipment and laboratory/facility fees are capped at \$10,000.
- Laboratory consumables, including chemicals, reagents, lab kits, etc.

INELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Funding/expenses for overlapping objectives and deliverables related to ongoing projects that are supported by other funding programs/third parties.
- Costs not directly associated with project deliverables, milestones, and commercialization goals.
- Costs related to proposal development (including staff costs).
- Capital Costs (e.g. equipment over \$10,000, land, buildings, vehicles, etc.).
- Personal expenditures, such as cell phone charges, hospitality, and IP protection costs for personally-owned IP.

SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed by a multi-disciplinary panel convened by the Vice-President, Research and Innovation. Each application will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. FOUNDATIONAL INNOVATION (40 POINTS)

- Description of the science, technology and foundational innovation to be developed.
- Developmental stage of the work and accomplished milestones to date.
- Description of the technical complexity and feasibility of the proposed project, including how a Derrick Rossi Innovation Award will advance the research towards implementation and impact.
- Funding secured to date that has directly advanced the work to date.

2. UNIQUENESS & POTENTIAL IMPACT (20 POINTS)

- The unmet need or key challenges this innovation will address.
- Uniqueness and competitive advantage(s) over existing approaches or solutions.
- Potential socio-economic benefits and impacts (i.e. health, sustainability, social, financial).

3. PROPOSED PATH TO ADOPTION (15 POINTS)

- Description of proposed activities with the funding requested, including proof-of-concept, pilot testing and other activities to test or validate the innovation.
- Alignment of proposed activities with supporting the implementation, knowledge mobilization, and/or commercialization objectives and steps.
- Describe the critical steps required to bring the innovation to market.
- Key stakeholders and thought leaders and future commercialization/dissemination plans, Canada and beyond.

4. CURRENT & FUTURE PARTNERSHIPS (10 POINTS)

- Role of any partners and their involvement to help facilitate adoption/commercialization.
- Describe any partner investments of cash or in-kind support towards the project, if any.
- Describe any additional partnerships you anticipate needing in the future, and the steps to secure their support.

5. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (5 POINTS)

- Existing IP (i.e. Disclosures, Patents, Copyrights, Trademarks).
- Describe who is assisting in IP protection (i.e. IPO, Patent Agent).
- Potential for generating new IP or improving existing IP.

6. PROJECT MILESTONES, BUDGET, BUDGET JUSTIFICATION, AND TEAM (10 POINTS)

- Clarity of project milestones, description of activities, anticipated start and completion dates.
- Alignment of proposed budget and justification of funding with the eligible expenditures.
- Description of the project team, proven track record and how their expertise relates to the plan activities/milestones.
- Evidence of concrete strategies to embed equity, diversity, and inclusion in the development and management of the project team.
- Considerations of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the design and impact of the innovation (as applicable).

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

The University of Toronto embraces diversity and is building a culture of belonging that increases our capacity to effectively address and serve the interests of our global community. We strongly encourage applications from Indigenous Peoples, Black and racialized persons, women, persons with disabilities, and people of diverse sexual and gender identities. The University also acknowledges that scholars have varying career paths and that career interruptions due to personal circumstances can be part of an excellent academic record. Review panel members have been instructed to consider and be sensitive to the impact of career interruptions in their assessments.

To be considered for this funding opportunity, all applicants are required to complete the [University of Toronto's Employment Equity Survey](#), available through Employee-Self Service, by no later than the application deadline. Applicants may voluntarily self-identify in any of the groups or log a response indicating that they decline the survey. Self-identification data is important to the University's ability to accurately identify barriers to participation and to develop strategies to eliminate these barriers. Aggregated results as of the closing of this posting will be sent to the Research Equity and Diversity Strategist and may be accessed by only a small number of designated senior administrators within the Division of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation (VPRI). Any information directly related to the applicant is confidential and cannot be accessed by the reviewers or by VPRI staff. The data is used by VPRI as part of our ongoing efforts to embed principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in the administration of internal funding programs. Please note that an updated Employment Equity Survey was launched in early 2023. If this updated version of the survey has already been completed that is sufficient for this requirement; the responses will be included in the aggregated results. If the applicant has not yet accessed the updated version, this must be done prior to the competition deadline.

Review panel members are required to complete an unconscious bias training module or provide confirmation of similar training.

AWARD DURATION AND REPORTING

The funding period starts July 2026 and ends two (2) years after the project start date. Projects must start no later than July 2026, or risk having the award revoked.

During the course of the award, representatives from the Innovations & Partnerships Office (IPO) may contact awardees to discuss project deliverables and milestones.

Final reports are due two (2) months after the project end date and must outline progress toward project deliverables and commercialization objectives. IPO will forward a summary of these reports along with written commentary to the Derrick Rossi Innovation Awards Committee. The Derrick Rossi Innovation Awards Committee reserves the right to request additional reports during or after the term of the award.

If the report is not submitted, the applicant will become ineligible to apply to this award in the future.

QUESTIONS

Inquiries related to invention or copyright disclosures, intellectual property, or project management should be directed to your IPO Commercialization Manager or commercialization@utoronto.ca.

Inquiries related to award administration (e.g. deadlines, submissions, eligibility, evaluation criteria, adjudication, award announcement, and fund set-up) should be directed to jacqueline.morton@utoronto.ca.