



CONNAUGHT INNOVATION AWARD GUIDELINES

"The primary purpose of the Fund is the promotion of research and the application of the professional expertise and resources of the University to matters of public interest in all research fields.... Connaught funds shall be used to support outstanding research by individuals or groups of scholars in the University. Grants are intended to encourage research of exceptional caliber or the development of new areas of research by scholars of outstanding achievement. Awards will be made in accordance with the most exacting standards of peer review."

- Excerpt from the Connaught Fund Terms of Reference

Notice of Intent (NOI) Deadline: September 25, 2026
Full Application Deadline: October 26, 2026

PURPOSE

The Connaught Innovation Awards provide one-time funding **up to \$150,000 to support technology validation, product development, and commercialization for projects at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4 and above** as defined by:

- [Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada \(ISED\)](#) for software and engineering.
- [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#) for therapeutics, medical devices and diagnostics.

Projects at a lower TRL **may be considered** if they include evidence of market need from industry, investors, community partners, or other organizations, and identify potential follow-up funding sources to advance the TRL.

Successful projects will have strong socio-economic and/or commercial potential, enabling the technology to make a positive impact on society.

The total funding available for this year's program is \$1,500,000. Applicants can request up to \$150,000 per project. Applicants requesting more than \$100,000 will require strong evidence of industry interest, leveraged funding opportunities, or investment (e.g. letters of support).

Applicants may submit only one proposal per competition.

ELIGIBILITY

- Projects must be led by a full-time faculty member whose primary employer is the U of T, and who is **Tri-Agency active** (i.e. currently holds funding from and/or has an active application to a Federal Tri-Agency program) at the time of the NOI submission date.
- The proposed project must be based on an existing invention disclosure **filed to and approved by IPO by September 14th, 2026**. More information on invention disclosures and the U of T Invention Policy can be found [here](#).
- Invention disclosures filed with an affiliated hospital are ineligible.
- Inventions that have previously received support through the Connaught Innovation Awards are ineligible.

ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

Eligible expenses include:

- Salaries and benefits for students, postdocs and technicians.
- Professional business development services, including market research, competitive market intelligence, business plans, legal and regulatory review. Collectively these costs are capped at \$15,000.
- 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.
- Travel, conference, and marketing expenses related to commercializing the intellectual property. Collectively these costs are capped at \$2,500.
- Research equipment, laboratory animals and laboratory/facility fees.
- Laboratory consumables including chemicals, reagents, and lab kits.

INELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Costs associated with patents or trademarks.
- Funding for overlapping objectives and deliverables that are supported by other funding programs.
- 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.).

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 weighted criteria:

1. Project Description (Scientific and Technical Merit) (20 points)

- Description of proposed research
- Clarity and focus of research objectives
- Novelty, technical complexity, technical risk, and feasibility
- Considerations of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the design and development of the invention (as applicable)

2. Market Potential & Socio-Economic Benefit (20 points)

- Market analyses highlighting unmet market or socio-economic need and market size
- Competitive landscape and unique advantage over current products or services
- Potential socio-economic benefit to Canada and society
- Considerations of equity and diversity in market access, socio-economic benefit, and/or social impact

3. Commercialization and Knowledge Transfer Plan (20 points)

- Description of activities toward market access
- Clarity and focus of commercialization objectives and plan
- Potential for further collaboration and funding by companies or other partners
- Explanation of the regulatory path required to bring the innovation to market as applicable
- Synopsis of further development of innovation beyond Connaught funding
- Description of potential outcomes upon successful completion of the project

4. Intellectual Property (15 points)

- Existing IP (including Patents, Copyright, Trademark, Trade Secrets, and/or Know-how)
- Potential for generating new IP or further developing existing IP
- Strategy for protecting existing and new IP

5. Budget Justification, Milestones and Team (15 points)

- Proposed budget and justification of funding. **Budget must reflect as accurately as possible and align with the eligible expenditures.**
- Milestones, description of activities, anticipated start and completion dates
- Adequacy of personnel and material resources allocated for research and commercialization activities

6. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (10 points)

- Evidence of concrete strategies to embed equity, diversity, and inclusion in the development and management of the project team

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.

In order to be considered for this funding opportunity, all applicants are required to answer 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 you 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 you have already completed this updated version survey, thank you; your responses will be included in the aggregated results. If you have not yet accessed the updated version, please do so 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 January 1, 2027, and ends December 31, 2027. Projects must start no later than April 1, 2027, or risk having the award revoked.

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

Final reports will outline progress toward project deliverables and commercialization objectives. IPO will forward a summary of these reports along with written commentary to the Connaught Committee. The Connaught Committee reserves the right to request additional reports during or after the term of the award.

QUESTIONS

Inquiries related to invention disclosure, intellectual property, or project management should be directed to your IPO Commercialization Manager or Liza Pereira, Innovation Administrator at ip.disclosures@utoronto.ca.

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