TIPS: SSHRC INSIGHT GRANT

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

SSHRC Insight Grants (IGs) provide **between $7,000 and $500,000 over three, four or five years** to support long-term research initiatives. The maximum annual request is $200,000. Applicants may be established or emerging scholars, and projects may be conducted by individuals or teams of researchers working in collaboration.

IG proposals are expected to respond to the objectives put forward in the call for proposals for the Insight program, namely to:

- Build knowledge and understanding from disciplinary, interdisciplinary and/or cross-sector perspectives through support for the best researchers.
- Support new approaches to research on complex and important topics, including those that transcend the capacity of any one scholar, institution or discipline.
- Provide a high-quality research training experience for students.
- Fund research expertise that relates to societal challenges and opportunities.
- Mobilize research knowledge, to and from academic and non-academic audiences, with the potential to lead to intellectual, cultural, social and economic influence, benefit and impact.

For shorter term and developmental projects, support is offered through the SSHRC Insight Development Grant. NOTE: A researcher cannot apply for both an Insight Development Grant and an Insight Grant in the same calendar year.

In the 2012 IG competition UofT had an overall success rate of 29.3%. The national success rate was 21.1% and U of T submitted 215 of the total 2220 applications received by SSHRC.

Please note that SSHRC provides a detailed description of the evaluation criteria on their website (at http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/insight_grants-subventions_savoir-eng.aspx) and the application form itself provides explicit instructions on how to complete each section (at https://webapps.nserc.ca/SSHRC/Instructions-Help/ig_instr_e.htm#ProgramIdentification). Please be sure to read those instructions thoroughly – these tips do not replace the information provided by SSHRC.

TIPS FOR THE SSHRC ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

GENERAL TIPS

Webform content from NOI: The application form contains data carried forward from the NOI, and any of it can be changed or overwritten, including the title.

Textboxes: the character counter is unreliable. Please save your data and use the Preview function to ensure that all text is visible in the textbox and looks the way you want it to.

Attachments: SSHRC's software will not allow you to Verify if you have not attached a document where required, or if your document is too long. It cannot detect whether the document attached is the correct one. Please ensure that the correct version of each attachment has been uploaded; SSHRC has disqualified applications in the past when a required section was missing because the wrong document was attached.

SSHRC's formatting specifications must be followed:
- Observe the SSHRC page limit for each attachment
- Page size is 8 ½" x 11"
- Attachments must be in PDF format, unprotected
- Maximum file size for each attachment is 500Kb
- Body text in minimum 12 point Times New Roman
- Single-spaced, maximum of 6 lines per inch
- Minimum ¾" margin on each side

There is no need to put your name at the top of each page or use page numbers.

WEBFORM

RESEARCH GROUP

Choose the research group which most closely represents the subject and discipline of the proposal. For multi- or interdisciplinary proposals, choose the group closest to your primary discipline (i.e. the discipline in which most of your contributions have been made). Please note that for each research group SSHRC will create several sub-committees, and there are also sub-committees for Priority Areas (the 2012 committee membership lists are available here). In addition, SSHRC offers the option of a multi-disciplinary evaluation (see below).

RESEARCH-CREATION

SSHRC define Research-Creation as including elements of artistic practice and expression: if you are considering selecting this option please check the definition at http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22 .

REQUEST FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY EVALUATION

If you select "yes", you will need to attach a one-page rationale for the request.

Please note that if no member of the evaluation committee has the additional expertise requested, SSHRC will, if possible, ask a member of another committee to assess your proposal. Their written assessment will be provided to members of the evaluation committee to take into consideration when reaching a consensus on scoring your proposal, but they do not attend the committee meeting.

SCHOLAR TYPE

This information is only collected by SSHRC for statistical purposes. There is no separate adjudication process or funding envelope for IG applicants who are emerging scholars, but their research contributions are evaluated according to their career stage.

PRIORITY AREA

This section is only required if you have indicated that your proposal is aligned with one or two Priority Areas.

- Aboriginal Research
- Canadian Environmental Issues
- Digital Economy
- Innovation, Leadership and Prosperity
- Northern Communities: Towards Social and Economic Prosperity

Note that SSHRC only requires you to explain your project's relevance to the first Priority Area. SSHRC may create targeted committees to evaluate proposals in priority areas. These committees are multi-disciplinary and may not contain scholars from your discipline.

In the textbox be sure to address the following questions:

1. How is your research relevant to the priority area?
2. How will your research lead to the expected outcomes of the priority area?

PARTICIPANTS

Enter your co-applicants and collaborators email addresses. The SSHRC system will send them each an email invitation. They will enter this in their SSHRC Portfolio page (registering for a SSHRC account if necessary) which will generate an Accepted Invitation form to which they will upload their Research Contributions. You will be able to see what they have attached and to view their SSHRC CV webform. They should update their SSHRC CV webform, edit and Verify until the system indicates they have successfully Verified, then click on Refresh CV. Your co-investigators must all have successfully Verified their invitations and CV forms, before you will be able to Verify the full application.

EDITORIAL ADVICE ON SPECIFIC SECTIONS

SUMMARY

The summary is the first impression you make on reviewers. It's the one section all committee members will read, and many use it to refresh their memories before reaching consensus on scoring your application.

- Successful grant writers sometimes start with the summary (as a scaffold) and then go back and revise as the proposal takes shape.
- Use plain language and make it compelling.
- Avoid cutting and pasting text from your detailed description: readers encountering the text again in the detailed description may read less closely.
- Have as many people as possible read the summary, including non-specialists, and revise it until everyone says it is crystal clear.

When writing your summary be sure that it answers the following questions:

- What are the challenges and issues to be addressed and why are they important?
- What is the overall goal and the main objectives of the proposed project?
- Why are you the right person/team to do it?

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- What will be the benefit and impact, within and beyond the academic community?

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In this section you describe your planned research and its context. In this funding opportunity 40% of the score is based on the Challenge criterion, which assesses the aim and importance of the endeavour, and draws mainly on this section. Ensure that you have addressed all the evaluation sub-criteria. The committee score sheet follows the evaluation criteria closely, and the score for each category is based upon the extent to which you satisfy each sub-criterion.

While the committee will refer to the assessments by external reviewers, they are not bound by them. It's a good idea to explain all terms and ensure that your methodology is described in detail and clearly linked to your objectives. NOTE: If you have identified a Priority Area, your proposal may be adjudicated by a multi-disciplinary committee with no members from your own discipline.

At a minimum, use the headings SSHRC request: Objectives, Context, Methodology. Ensure that your Detailed Description is easy for assessors to read and navigate through, and ensure that they can find the various elements addressed in the evaluation criteria. You can use other headings as appropriate, and make judicious use of bolding and italics. Leave plenty of white space.

State clearly and precisely the explicit objectives of your research and explain its originality, significance and contribution to knowledge. Situate it in the context of the relevant scholarly literature and describe the theoretical approach or framework. Ensure that your literature review is thorough and up to date; an inadequate literature review is a common complaint of adjudication committees. It is usually better to acknowledge work with which you disagree than to omit it.

Describe the proposed research strategies and activities and relate them to the objectives. Clearly justify your choice of methodology and explain any specific instruments or procedures.

Where appropriate, consider including tables or charts, such as timelines. These form part of the six pages allowed for this section, and the text within any tables should be legible, ideally 12 pt.

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

In this section you must convince SSHRC that you have solid plans to facilitate the multidirectional flow of knowledge enabling benefits and impacts of research beyond campus (wherever appropriate).
- What is your plan for increasing the accessibility, flow and exchange of knowledge among various appropriate audiences (academic and/or non-academic)?
- ➢ Give concrete examples, highlight <u>unique</u> initiatives, and elaborate on the purpose of the activity if necessary.
- Who is the audience for knowledge mobilization (including, as applicable, diverse groups of researchers, policy-makers, business leaders, community groups, educators, media, international audiences, practitioners, decision-makers and the general public)?

- You can refer to teaching, curriculum and pedagogy development.
- What is the schedule for the KM activities? Be realistic and consider a figure or Gantt chart if applicable.
- Consider both traditional and innovative methods

For more information on knowledge mobilization approaches, see SSHRC's website.

LIST OF REFERENCES

This is a list of references cited in your proposal.

RESEARCH TEAM, PREVIOUS OUTPUT AND STUDENT TRAINING

RESEARCH TEAM

If you have co-applicants/collaborators, describe why a team approach is required.
- Indicate the roles and responsibilities of each member; and the value added by each.
- Use percentages to show the proportion of the project for which each researcher is responsible. The score for co-applicants' CVs will be weighted in proportion to their participation.
- Co-applicants' CVs are included in the scoring for Capability, those for collaborators are not.
- If you have a co-applicant who is an established researcher, clearly explain their contribution. This is especially important if they senior to the applicant.
- Ensure that your methodology is supported by the areas of expertise of your research team.
- Do not include research assistants in this section, or paid technical consultants.

PREVIOUS AND ONGOING RESEARCH

- Summarize the results from previous and ongoing research. Describe any results which have informed the current project, and any feasibility or pilot studies which contribute to its likelihood of success. Demonstrate how the new research builds upon past work.
- Note any links between co-applicants' research and the current proposal.

STUDENT TRAINING AND MENTORING

In this section you describe your plans for training and mentoring, and link these plans to your project and its objectives. This section contributes to the score for Challenge, which is weighted at 40% of the total. SSHRC encourages the training of students, but it is vital that their participation be essential to the project.
- Ensure that you describe what the students will be doing, what they will learn and how they will benefit from participation.
  - How will they be supervised?
  - Will there be opportunities for co-authorship?
- If appropriate, note whether you have access to students who possess specialized skills.

- If you have a particular student in mind, who brings unique and valuable skills, it is fine to describe them.

FUNDS REQUESTED FROM SSHRC

Here you must convince SSHRC of the quality of your financial planning and your justification of the proposed expenditures. The Feasibility criterion includes appropriateness of the requested budget and justification of the proposed costs. Although it only counts for 20% of the overall score, a proposal must receive a passing mark in Feasibility (minimum 3/6) for the application to be potentially fundable, and a low score will lower the ranking of a proposal with otherwise strong scores.

Your proposal will be evaluated by a committee which is considering a group of applications: ensure that your requested budget is in line with what is being requested in your discipline. Check with past grantees, consult the SSHRC website for past competition results, and if necessary contact a SSHRC program officer.

Read the Tri-Agency Use of Grant Funds guidelines for eligible and ineligible SSHRC expenses, at http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Professors-Professeurs/FinancialAdminGuide-GuideAdminFinancier/FundsUse-UtilisationSubventions_eng.asp
- Ensure that your budget reflects closely the methodology described in the proposal.
- Follow institutional guidelines where applicable:
  - For compensation rates, ask your business officer
  - Travel per diems, use UofT rates ($55 in Canada, $75 international)
- Students may be paid by stipend or hourly: if by stipend, it must be justified by their role; if hourly, indicate that the total rate includes benefits and vacation pay.
- Support for post-doctoral fellows is limited to two years. If a post-doc is receiving compensation from the grant, they cannot be listed as a collaborator.
- Tablets are now allowed, if necessary for the project – if you are including them you must demonstrate that they are essential and the most effective use of the funds.
- Cell phones are only allowed if needed for data collection or safety.
- Total costs for Research Tools with a development/purchase cost between $7,000 and $100,000 must be listed under Other and described in the Budget Justification (see SSHRC's Support of Tools for Research and Related Activities guidelines).
- Avoid including items that are not clearly related to the project e.g. travel for dissemination early in the project.
- Avoid multiple trips to one destination without justification.
- Avoid hiring non-students without a clear justification.
- Do not include overhead or administrative charges.
- Avoid math errors.

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

- Follow the structure of the Funds Requested from SSHRC form.
- Explain what each student will be doing during each period.

- Distinguish between research and dissemination travel.
- Explain how each budget item is calculated: e.g. number of people x (airfare + local transportation + ((hotel + per diem) x number of nights); and explain why each trip is necessary. Indicate the significance of conferences and the reason for travel to a particular destination.
- Use the UofT per diem rates (at http://www.finance.utoronto.ca/gtfm/travel/rates.htm).
- Research Tools with a development/purchase cost between $7,000 and $100,000 must have a fully justified budget breakdown in table form (see SSHRC's Support of Tools for Research and Related Activities guidelines).

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Use the drop down lists and text box to indicate the significance, contribution and impact of the project, which will be evaluated under the Challenge criterion. SSHRC will introduce a new version of the final research report which will allow you to comment on the actual outcomes.

RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS CRITIQUES

This section is optional, but can be used effectively. The tone of the response is very important – it's a good idea to have others read it to ensure that it is courteous and positive. Committee members will not be given previous submissions, but because committees often have continuing members, an earlier application may be remembered. This section can be used to indicate how feedback has been used to strengthen the proposal, in particular the committee's recommendations or any comments from the external assessors which the committee noted as significant in their assessment of the previous proposal. You can usefully highlight praise of the earlier proposal. You can also address aspects of the previous proposal which were misinterpreted, if you have addressed this in the main proposal but wish to ensure that your decisions are understood.

SUGGESTED ASSESSORS

If possible, suggest at least two. SSHRC will try to use at least one of yours and one of their own choosing, so if your field is small, do not list all of the obvious people. In addition, please note that one of the sources SSHRC program officers draw on in identifying external assessors is the proposal's literature review.

EXCLUSION OF POTENTIAL ASSESSORS

This is an optional one-page attachment which is only used by SSHRC staff; it does not go to external assessors or the adjudication committee. It is used to request that SSHRC not select specific individuals as external assessors for the project, since they will not be able to provide an impartial review (due, for instance, to professional disagreements or past associations). A brief justification should be included. The SSHRC staff is not bound by these requests, but will take them into consideration.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

The Research Contributions document is uploaded to the application form. Observe SSHRC's categories. Do not include work not yet submitted (you may allude to it in the Previous and Ongoing Research section of the application). Be sure to use asterisks to indicate contributions which result from earlier SSHRC support; the committee will be evaluating your productivity with past SSHRC funding.

You can use free-form text to explain the significance of contributions, particularly important in applications to Priority Area committees in which the members may be unfamiliar with the key journals or conferences in your field. You can, for instance, highlight the importance of journals, include citation figures, and explain how you have shown student authors.

Career Interruptions: a career interruption is a period in which you were unable to conduct research for various reasons. You can include contributions going back for a period of the same length before October 2007, so that your contributions represent six years of activity.

Special Circumstances: special circumstances are those which cause a slowdown in your research output but not a complete halt. You cannot add time to the six-year period, but you can include an explanation of the slowdown, and confirm if possible that the issues are resolved and that your usual productivity has resumed.

RESEARCH-CREATION SUPPORT MATERIAL

This is only required if the applicant has indicated that the project involves Research-Creation. Ensure that the site is easy to access, and will remain functional until April 2014.

SSHRC FORMAT CV

Your CV webform is captured at the moment when you click on Submit. Your co-applicants' and collaborators' CVs are captured when they Accept the Invitation. They should follow the instructions on the SSHRC site to refresh their CV webforms if they make changes after Accepting the Invitation.

GENERAL EDITORIAL TIPS

Write with the committee and assessors in mind, anticipate their questions and make sure that you provide answers. Clearly establish the need for the research. Present a challenging topic and demonstrate its importance and originality. Convey and inspire confidence, and excitement, and strike a balance between ambition and realism.

Invest time in the preparation of your proposal, it should be well-written, carefully crafted and without errors.

Best wishes for success!