2019 Exploration Competition

How to Prepare a Letter of Intent to Apply – Applicants

August 2019
Presentation Overview

• Program description
• Competition stages and timeline
• Roles and eligibility of participants
• Subject matter eligibility
• Letter of Intent to Apply (LOI)
• Submitting the LOI
• LOI review process
• Convergence Portal live demo
• Q&A Session
New Frontiers in Research Fund
Exploration Stream

• Objectives:
  – Generate opportunities to conduct high risk, high reward and interdisciplinary research
  – Support research that pushes the boundaries of what is funded through the agencies

• Minimum of 100 awards
  – Maximum of $125,000 per year for up to 2 years
    • includes indirect costs of up to 25% of direct costs
    • maximum of $100,000/year for direct costs of research
# Competition Stages and Timeline

## NOI Stage
- **Competition launch and Convergence Portal opens** *(July 3rd)*

## August
- **Submission of Notification of Intent to apply (NOI)** *(due Aug. 7th)*

## LOI stage
- **Submission of Letter of Intent to apply (LOI)** *(due Sep. 4th)*

## October
- **LOI stage results and invitations to submit an Application** *(Oct. 31st)*

## Application Stage
- **Dec - March**
  - **Submission of Application** *(due Dec. 10th)*
  - **External reviews and committee assessment**
- **March**
  - **Multidisciplinary review panel meeting**
- **March**
  - **Release of Notices of Decision by March 31st**
  - **Grant starts on March 31, 2020**
Roles and Eligibility

• Nominated Principal Investigator (NPI)
  – Independent researcher with primary affiliation at a Canadian institution holding full institutional eligibility with one of the agencies as of March 31, 2020

• Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)
  – Independent researcher
  – May not be affiliated with a government or for-profit organization
  – May be a Canadian or international participant

* Please consult our Funding Opportunity for more information
Roles and Eligibility

• **Co-Applicants**
  – Independent researcher or other type of research participant
  – May not be affiliated with a government department or for-profit organization
  – May be a Canadian or international participant

• **Collaborators**
  – Any individual that contributes to the project and is not supervised by a team member
  – No access to funds

***No change of participants or collaborators after submission of the LOI to the agency***
Subject Matter Eligibility

• Must be interdisciplinary
  – Push the boundaries of what can be funded through the agencies, according to their mandates and existing programs

• Must be high risk, high reward projects
  – Project with risk of failure, but that could yield huge impacts
Letter of Intent to Apply (LOI)

An NPI must have submitted an NOI to be eligible to create and submit an LOI in Convergence.

LOI Deadline: September 4

Check with your RGO for internal deadlines
Letter of Intent to Apply (LOI)

Content

• Information submitted in the NOI
• Changes to the participants (Co-PI/Co-app)
  – Cannot leave one project to join another
• Changes to the list of collaborators
• Changes to the list of suggested reviewers
• Changes to the list of reviewer exclusions (if applicable)
• 5 supporting documents, each uploaded as a separate attachment
LOI - Selecting External Reviewers

- **Conflicts of interest**
- Identify appropriate **expertise**
  - Ability to review with confidence (incl. language)
  - Experts familiar with the various disciplinary approaches in the interdisciplinary project
- Consider **diversity** in your selection
  - Canadian, international
  - Private, government, public sectors
  - Gender
  - Under-represented groups
  - Established, mid career, early career researchers
Double-Blind Review

• Double-blind review occurs at the External Review stage (after LOI review)

• Anonymity of reviewer and applicant

• Focus of Exploration grants is on the high-risk, high-reward and interdisciplinary nature of the project

• Focus on the research rather than the team

• Feasibility criterion- can the research team carry out the proposed research?
LOI Attachments- Confidentiality

- Attachments submitted at the LOI stage cannot be updated at the application stage

- Requirements for confidentiality:
  - Do not include personally identifying information in the attachments
  - When referring to prior research, use the third person in statements (e.g., article was published; research was conducted on...);
    - You may include your own articles in Literature References
  - Do not provide links to your personal sites (blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)

- Double-blinded review will be conducted at the application stage
LOI - Instructions for Attachments

• All documents must be converted to Portable Document Format (PDF) before uploading

• Formatting instructions for attachments

***Be mindful of formatting requirements (page length, font size, margins, no personally identifying information, etc.) as applications that do not adhere to the requirements can be withdrawn***
LOI - Supporting Documents

Description of the proposed research project
(maximum one page)

• Overall goal and objectives of the research
• Challenge(s) or issue(s) to be addressed
• Potential benefit(s)/outcome(s)
LOI - Supporting Documents

Explanation of High Risk
(maximum one page)

• High risk nature and rationale

• Consider:
  • Unique directions
  • Challenging current paradigms
  • Enhancing our understanding
  • Novel interdisciplinary approaches
  • Development or adaptation of methods and techniques
Potential for High Reward
(maximum one page)

- Potential outcomes and rationale

- Consider:
  - Broad impact
  - Reach
  - Impact on research or the research community
LOI - Supporting Documents

Interdisciplinarity/Fit to Program
(maximum one page)

• Interdisciplinary nature of proposed research
• Why this approach is needed and/or the added value
• Rationale for meeting program requirements and expectations
• Consider:
  • Novelty of perspective
  • Novelty of approach
  • Project design
  • Fit to program
LOI - Supporting Documents

Literature references
(maximum one page)

• Create new references attachment at the application stage
Submitting the LOI

- Review
- Accept the Terms and Conditions
- Status: Received by Administrator
- For changes: ask RGO to return it to you
- RGO approves and submits to agency
  - Status: Received by Agency
  - No further changes can be made
LOI Review Process

• Adjudicated by Multidisciplinary Review Panel
  – Interdisciplinarity/Fit to program
  – High Risk
  – High Reward

Purpose

• Eliminate applications which do not meet the objectives of the program
• Manage application volume
LOI Review Process - Scoring

• Multidisciplinary review panel

• 3 committee members to evaluate each LOI
  – 2 members with expertise in the fields of research associated with the proposal
  – 1 member with no expertise

• Scoring of assigned applications (evaluation Matrix):
  – Interdisciplinarity/fit to program: pass/fail
  – High Risk: 50% of overall score
  – High Reward: 50% of overall score
LOI Review Process - Scoring

- **Evaluation Matrices found online**

### High Risk Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium-High</th>
<th>Medium-Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique directions</strong></td>
<td>Addresses a completely new theory.</td>
<td>Addresses a novel concept that bridges theories established in different fields.</td>
<td>Addresses a novel concept closely linked to established theories.</td>
<td>Represents an incremental or &quot;logical next step&quot; approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenging current paradigms</strong></td>
<td>Aims to radically challenge accepted theories.</td>
<td>Aims to challenge accepted theories.</td>
<td>Will test established theories.</td>
<td>Aims to reinforce established theories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enhancing our understanding</strong></td>
<td>Aims to extraordinarily enhance our understanding of a complex and challenging issue and/or significantly enhance our understanding of multiple complex and challenging issues.</td>
<td>Aims to significantly enhance our understanding of a complex and challenging issue and/or notably enhance our understanding of multiple complex and challenging issues.</td>
<td>Aims to notably enhance our understanding of a complex and challenging issue.</td>
<td>Aims for an incremental advancement in our understanding of a complex and challenging issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Novel interdisciplinary approaches</strong></td>
<td>Is at the interface between disciplines, requiring a novel interdisciplinary approach (i.e., two or more disciplines that are not commonly combined). Goes beyond established approaches of any single discipline, bringing together disparate disciplines in new ways.</td>
<td>Crosses disciplinary boundaries and integrates approaches from two or more disciplines.</td>
<td>Crosses disciplinary boundaries, using approaches from one or more disciplines.</td>
<td>Crosses disciplinary boundaries, involving two (or more) disciplines that are closely related or commonly crossed. (The interdisciplinary approach is established.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development or adaptation of methods and techniques</strong></td>
<td>Involves the development of novel methods or techniques.</td>
<td>Involves the adaptation of methods and techniques to a new field.</td>
<td>Involves the application of proven methods and techniques in a new context.</td>
<td>Involves proven methods or techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The application did not adequately establish the high risk nature of the project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LOI Review Process - Adjudication

• Top-ranked LOIs: not discussed, invited to submit application

• Discussed LOIs:
  • Discrepancy between the scores where one is high enough to be invited
  • Sufficiently high scores to be invited, but with at least one “fail” for interdisciplinarity/ fit to program

• Lower-ranked LOIs: not invited to submit an application
How to use the Convergence Portal
## Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NFRF contact</th>
<th><a href="mailto:NFRF-FNFR@chairs-chaires.gc.ca">NFRF-FNFR@chairs-chaires.gc.ca</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Deadlines</td>
<td>Your institution’s Research Grants Office / RGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>NFRF website</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Opportunity</td>
<td><strong>Funding Opportunity</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| On-line Services Helpdesk         | E-mail: websupport@chairs-chaires.gc.ca  
                                      Telephone: 613-995-4273 |