

Early Researcher Awards (ERA) Program

Round 15 Application Deadline:
Thursday, October 10, 2019

August 15, 2019

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What is the Early Researcher Awards Program?

- ▶ The Early Researcher Awards program (ERA) helps promising, recently-appointed Ontario researchers build their research teams.
- ▶ The goal of the program is to improve Ontario's ability to attract and retain the best and brightest research talent in all research disciplines.
- ▶ Each award to a leading researcher is a maximum of \$100,000 and must be matched by an additional \$50,000 from the researcher's institution and/or partner organization.
- ▶ The funds are to be used over a period of five years to fund eligible expenses for a research team of undergraduates, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, research assistants, associates, and technicians.
- ▶ In addition, up to \$40,000 will be provided by the Ministry to the institution for indirect costs.

Deadlines

- No Notice of Intent (NoI) this Round
- Complete applications must be received or **post-marked** on or before the deadline of **4 p.m. Thursday October 10, 2019.**

ERA Eligibility

- ▶ The ERA program is open on a competitive basis to researchers who;
 - are full-time faculty or principal investigators at an eligible research institution
 - have started their academic career on or after January 1, 2014
 - have completed their first Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree, Medical Doctor or terminal degree on or after January 1, 2009
 - have not already held an Early Researcher Award
 - are not a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair

Note: Researchers who were not successful in previous rounds may submit an application to this competition, **provided they continue to meet all eligibility requirements.**

ERA Eligibility

Considerations

- ▶ Continued education, required training (e.g. medical training and fellowships), and parental leave are considered eligible interruptions, but **must be** clearly described in **section 8.d.** of the application form.
- ▶ Research associate positions and post-doctoral fellowships are **not** considered eligible interruptions.
- ▶ The Ministry generally defines an independent academic research appointment as a position where a researcher is capable of independently publishing (without supervision), supervising, and applying for funding.

Sources of Matching Funding

- ▶ Each award to a leading researcher is a maximum of \$100,000 and must be matched by an additional \$50,000 from the researcher's institution and/or a partner organization.
- ▶ The institution is responsible for ensuring that the partner contribution is in place at the time the award is made.
- ▶ **The intention of the ERA program is to leverage additional, new funding for early-career researchers.**

Sources of Matching Funding

Eligible Matching Funds:

- Partner contributions must be in cash;
- University scholarships for undergraduates, graduate students and fellowships to post-doctoral fellows on the research team, as well as private or public sector contributions are eligible.

Ineligible Matching Funds:

- Teaching assistantships;
- Start up funds from the institution intended to assist newly-appointed faculty members launch their research careers;
- Awards administered by federal granting councils;
- Specific purpose grants received from Ontario government ministries and agencies, and funds leveraged by such grants;
- Ontario graduate scholarships; and Ontario graduate fellowships.

Eligible Expenditures

- ▶ The award can cover the following expenses for the Research Team:
 - Salaries and benefits;
 - Essential and reasonable travel and expenses related to conferences, workshops or seminars; and
 - Essential and reasonable travel and expenses related directly to offsite research activities.
- ▶ The award may also be used for Youth Research and Innovation Outreach activities. (Up to \$1000 in total)
- ▶ The amount paid to graduate students and post-doctoral fellows must be in keeping with the levels established by other award programs. Salaries must be commensurate with institutional remuneration scales.
- ▶ The Research Team must be based in Ontario.
- ▶ Up to 5% of the award amount (\$7,500 in total) can be used for discretionary expenses in keeping with the objective of the program. **This cannot be used to supplement the PI's income.**

Ineligible Expenditures

- ▶ Funds received through this grant cannot be spent on:
 - Salary, benefits or expenses of the researcher;
 - The purchase of supplies or equipment;
 - The operation of equipment and facilities;
 - Salaries or expenses of individuals performing contract research (where the contractor owns the intellectual property);
 - Visiting fellows; and
 - Salaries, benefits or expenses of ineligible team members.

Review Process

The ERA review process includes the following steps:

- 1) Institutions submit complete application packages;
- 2) Ministry staff review applications for completeness;
- 3) Panel Chairs determine applicant's eligibility;
- 4) Eligible applications are forwarded to peer review panels for an expert review;
- 5) Review panels make recommendations to the Ontario Research Fund (ORF) Advisory Board;
- 6) ORF Advisory Board makes recommendations to the Minister;
- 7) Minister makes final decisions;
- 8) Decisions are communicated to the Vice-President of Research and Institutional Contact of the applicant institution; and
- 9) Panel comments are provided to unsuccessful applicants.

Note: Successful Awards will be contracted in Fall/Winter 2020.

Review Process

Applications are assigned to one of nine review panels: Arts & Humanities; Energy, Engineering & Emerging Technologies; Environmental & Natural Sciences; Health Systems Research; ICT, Math & Physics; Life Sciences – Clinical; Life Sciences – Non-Clinical; Materials & Advanced Manufacturing; Social Sciences

- ❖ The Ministry reserves the right to choose reviewers and to assign applications to an appropriate panel;
- ❖ There is no appeal of decisions, including decisions regarding the eligibility of the application;
- ❖ The ERA program is a discretionary, non-entitlement program; and
- ❖ Funding is awarded on a competitive basis.

Evaluation Criteria

- ▶ Early Researcher Award applications are evaluated based on four weighted criteria; Excellence of the Researcher, Quality of the Research, Development of Research Talent, and Strategic Value to Ontario.
- ▶ The applications will be ranked exceptional; excellent; very strong; strong; moderate; or insufficient.

Evaluation Criteria

Excellence of the Researcher (40%)

- Academic and employment record
- Research grants and awards received
- Publication record
- Other areas of research productivity
- Researcher's current and potential standing for excellence in the research field based on research plans and letters of reference
- Independence from previous supervisor regarding publication record
- Independent peer-reviewed funding

Evaluation Criteria

Quality of Research (30%)

- Excellence of proposed research
- Originality of proposed research
- Clarity of research proposal
- Relevance of methodology

Evaluation Criteria

Development of Research Talent (20%)

- Development of research knowledge of members of research team
- Skills development of team
- Training is unique and leading edge
- Past experience in HQP training

Evaluation Criteria

Strategic Value for Ontario (10%)

Proposed research program demonstrates potential for strategic value for Ontario and other government priorities, including but not limited to:

- Economic benefits
- Knowledge transfer
- Ability to enhance the province's profile in the global academic community
- Social and/or cultural benefits

Application Process

- Applications are to be submitted to the Ministry no later than **October 10, 2019** through one of the methods outlined below.
- No paper copies are required.
- Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.
- All documents required along with the application form (Proposal, CV and three reference letters) should be included in the application package, not sent separately to the Ministry.

Application Package

The application package includes:

- ▶ a copy of the completed and signed [Application form](#)
- ▶ appendix A - Completed budget table
- ▶ appendix B - Proposed research (maximum of 5 pages including appendices, excluding references)
- ▶ appendix C - research productivity and recognition - researcher's full Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- ▶ Appendix D - three reference letters

Application Submission

- 1) Electronic applications can be submitted via USB drive mailed to the attention of:

Early Researcher Awards Program
Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
Research, Science and Commercialization
Science and Research Branch
2 Queen Street East, 3rd floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N3

- 2) Electronic applications can be submitted to the ministry via your organization's preferred secure cloud storage solution (File Transfer Protocol (FTP), Dropbox, Google Drive, etc.). The link should be sent to; awards-mri@ontario.ca

Note: It is the Institutions responsibility to ensure that applications are received by the Ministry by the deadline.

Reference Letters

- ▶ Provide three original letters of reference accompanying the ERA package.
- ▶ The letters should address the ERA Evaluation Criteria. It is recommended that referees have access to the applicant's research proposal and full CV.
- ▶ One of the reference letters must be from a former supervisor, mentor, collaborator or corporate sponsor familiar with the researcher.
- ▶ **Two of the reference letters must be from arm's length sources** (i.e., arm's length referees must not have a conflict of interest by having a personal link with the researcher, or by being a colleague, a research collaborator or a corporate sponsor of the researcher).
- ▶ It is recommended that the **arm's length letters** be from researchers of **international stature** familiar with the researcher's work.

Youth Research and Innovation Outreach

- ▶ Applicants are required to undertake youth outreach activities and may use up to 1% (equivalent to \$1000) of the funding provided by the Ministry.
- ▶ Funding provided by the institution and/or partner organization may not be used for youth outreach.
- ▶ Activities associated with youth outreach are to be undertaken **during each year of the project.**
- ▶ Activities should be free and targeted towards high-school, middle school and elementary school students

Suggestions

- ▶ Past review panels have stressed the importance of:
 - Being actively involved in conducting research that has been supported by peer-reviewed funding (overlap is okay!).
 - Demonstrating academic independence from previous supervisors.
 - Evidence of publishing with students, or student involvement in conference papers.
- ERA panels are multidisciplinary and the application will be reviewed by panel members that are within and outside of the applicant's specific field of research. The content and language of the proposal should be clear and understood by people outside of the applicant's field.
- Applicants are encouraged to link the Proposal to the Research Milestones by describing specific roles and responsibilities of the Research Team.

Common Application Weaknesses

- ▶ failure to meet research excellence criterion
- ▶ proposed research lacks focus (numerous, unrelated or loosely related projects)
- ▶ proposal contains technical jargon and the content and language is not clear
- ▶ failure to “make the case”, i.e. to explain the steps that led to the proposed research concept
- ▶ failure to demonstrate independence from previous supervisors
- ▶ lack of detail in the HQP plan and/or strategic value to Ontario
- ▶ lack of funds to complete the proposed research and HQP training
- ▶ reference letters are not sufficiently arm’s length
- ▶ **failure to follow formatting instructions outlined in the guidelines**

Appendix C: Researcher's CV Format

Applicants must submit a CV formatted in the following order;

- ▶ personal information
- ▶ education
- ▶ recognitions
- ▶ user profile
- ▶ employment history
- ▶ research funding history
- ▶ activities
 - student/postdoctoral supervision
 - editorial activities
 - international collaboration
 - committee memberships
- ▶ contributions (you are only required to complete each category if applicable)
 - presentations
 - interview and media relations
 - publications and citations
 - artistic performances/exhibits
 - intellectual property

Contact Information

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