

Early Researcher Award Information Session

**University of Toronto
Research Services Office**

**June 5, 2018
MSB 2170**

Topics To Be Covered

Important Information

- Eligibility
- Budget Tips

Application Walkthrough

- Application Evaluation
- Tips for Specific Sections
- General Tips & Common Weaknesses
- Reference Letters
- Dates & Deadlines

Eligibility Checklist

- Full-time faculty members or principal investigators who, at the application deadline, are based at an eligible institution
- As of July 1, 2018: within **5 years** of starting independent academic career (**i.e., start date on or after July 1, 2013**)
- As of July 1, 2018: within **10 years** of completing first PhD, MD, or DVM degree (**i.e., completed on or after July 1, 2008**)
- Continued education, required training (e.g., medical training and medical fellowships, but not RAs and PDFs), and parental leave are considered eligible interruptions.
- Eligible interruptions must be clearly described in **section 8d**. Use all of the allotted space (and provide further detail in your CV).

Eligible Expenditures

- \$100,000 ERA + \$50,000 matching are eligible for undergraduates, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, research assistants, research associates, and technicians carrying out the research.
 - Salaries and benefits
 - Essential and reasonable travel and expenses related to conferences, workshops, or seminars
 - Essential and reasonable travel and expenses related directly to offsite research activities
- Youth research and innovation outreach activities may use up to 1% (or \$1,000) of the funding provided by the Ministry.

Ineligible Expenditures

- Funds received cannot be spent on the following:
 - Salary, benefits, or expenses of the researcher
 - Purchase of supplies or equipment
 - Operation of equipment and facilities
 - Salaries or expenses of individuals performing contract research (where the contractor owns the intellectual property)
 - Visiting fellows
 - Salaries, benefits, or expenses of ineligible team members

Eligible Matching Funds

- Matching funds must adhere to the “eligible/ineligible expenditures” listed in the guidelines
 - All matching funds must be student compensation or student travel expenses
- Contributions must be in cash
- Eligible funds: university scholarships for undergraduate/ graduate students and fellowships (e.g., UTF) for post-docs on the research team, as well as private or public sector contributions, excluding Ontario-based support (e.g., OGS)
- Contributing partners must submit proof of their contribution with the application, using the Ministry’s matching letter template

Ineligible Matching Funds

- Teaching assistantships
- Start-up funds from the institution intended to assist newly appointed faculty members launch their research careers
- Funding through federal granting councils (Tri-Council, etc.)
- Funding from Ontario government ministries and agencies, and funds leveraged by such research awards
- Ontario Graduate Scholarships and Ontario Graduate Fellowships

Budget

Youth Outreach activities should be maximum of \$1,000

Total expenditures should equal \$150,000

Total ERA amount should equal \$100,000

Total Matching Amount should equal \$50,000

Total Indirect Costs should equal \$40,000

Team Member	Expenditure	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Undergraduate Student	Salary						
Master's Student	Salary						
Doctoral Student	Salary						
Post-doctoral Fellow	Salary						
Research Assistant	Travel						
Research Associate	Benefits						
	Youth Outreach Activities						\$1,000
	Total						\$150,000
	ERA Amount						\$100,000
	Matching Amount						\$50,000
	Requested Reimbursement for Indirect Costs						\$40,000

Examples of Matching Funds

- Common examples of matching funds:
 - Student awards paid by the department (graduate support, travel awards)
 - University of Toronto Fellowships
 - University of Toronto awards (e.g., Connaught)
 - Private sector funding
 - Funding from US/international agencies

Application Evaluation

Evaluation criteria

- Excellence of the Researcher (40%)
- Quality of Research (30%)
- Development of Research Talent (20%)*
- Strategic Value for Ontario (10%)*

*** These sections are very important**

Application Evaluation

In each of the 4 evaluation criteria, your application will be evaluated as follows:

**Exceptional
Excellent**

**Very Strong
Strong
Moderate
Insufficient**

Application Evaluation

- Applications are ranked relative to other applications.
- This is a very competitive program.
- In the 2017 competition (Round 13), U of T submitted 47 applications, and 16 were successful. U of T's success rate was 34%, compared to the province-wide success rate of 40%.
- Be cautious about submitting an application if you were recently appointed.
- You must follow all formatting guidelines.

Application Evaluation

Who is my audience?

- “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.**”
- Avoid technical jargon/discipline-specific terminology (i.e., use clear, straightforward language).
- Explain any necessary technical terms/concepts.
- Give the big picture: why is this research significant?

Research Summary (sec. 7)

The summary is the first impression you make on reviewers

- 150 words maximum
- Write a **compelling** summary of your research that includes the following information:
 - **What** the issues are
 - **How** you will address them (methodology)
 - ***Why* you are addressing them** (including the value for Ontario)
- Have as many people as possible (within and outside your field) read the summary and provide feedback.

Description of Researcher (sec. 8a)

This section allows you to address the “Excellence of the Researcher” criterion

- 150 words maximum
- Discuss your area(s) of expertise and your accomplishments within the field (publications, awards, grants, etc.).
- You will need to be selective: highlight your independence from your former supervisor(s).
- Discuss your current standing in your field and potential for excellence based on your research plans.

Interruptions or Delays (sec. 8d)

This section allows you to provide the review panel with information about interruptions or delays in the past five/ten years.

- 150 words maximum (use all the allotted space)
- Provide the **necessary detail** here—you will not be able to provide further documentation.
- Include **months** in your date ranges.
- If there have been no delays or interruptions, please state “None.” Do not leave sections blank.

Researcher's Background in Training — HQP (sec. 10b)

- 150 words maximum
- Describe the skills your trainees gained. Emphasize transferable skills.
- Describe **unique** opportunities and experiences for HQP.
- Highlight particular successes by past trainees.
- State how past experience is indicative of future success.
- Address three criteria: “Excellence of the Researcher,” “Development of Research Talent,” and “Strategic Value for Ontario” (HQP knowledge transfer).

Researcher's Background in Training —Co-supervised HQP (sec. 10c)

- 150 words maximum
- Describe your roles and responsibilities as a co-supervisor.
- Describe the skills that trainees gained or any unique opportunities you provided.

Training Plans (sec. 11)

This section allows you to address “Development of Research Talent” and “Strategic Value for Ontario”

- 300 words maximum
- Link to your proposed research and training milestones.
- Present a **clear training plan** that addresses these four points:

Specific Roles &
Responsibilities

Knowledge and
Skills Gained

Unique Training

Employability

Strategic Value to Ontario (sec. 12)

- 200 words maximum
- Anticipated outcome and potential impact of research
- Focus on one or two key impacts and make a strong case for each.

Economic and/or
Social Benefits

Knowledge
Transfer/
Experiential
Learning

Ontario's
Innovation Agenda

Ontario's
International
Profile

Youth Outreach Plan (sec. 13)

- 200 words maximum
- 1% maximum of ERA funding
- Address the “Development of Research Talent” criterion.
- You can also use this section to address the “Strategic Value to Ontario.”
- The primary target for outreach is high school, middle school, and elementary school students.
- Talk to department/faculty high school liaison about existing programs.
- Activities must take place in **each year** of the project.

Milestones & Deliverables (sec. 14)

- List major milestones and deliverables in four areas:
 - Recruitment milestone
 - Training milestone
 - Research milestone
 - Youth Outreach milestone (must occur in each year)
- Ensure that milestones are realistic and achievable. They will be used to monitor progress if your application is successful.
- Keep in mind that it may take up to a year to advertise and fill some positions.

Proposed Research (Appendix B)

FIVE-PAGE ATTACHMENT (excluding references)

- Be sure to follow the MRIS formatting requirements in the Program Guidelines (e.g., single-spaced, Arial 12-point font, black, 1-inch margins).
- Failure to follow these requirements **will render your proposal ineligible**.
- **Make it easy on the reviewers:**
 - Ensure the proposal is easy to read by using a logical heading system, bullets, bold text, etc.
 - Use a clear structure and explain the implications for the non-specialist.

Proposed Research (Appendix B)

FIVE-PAGE ATTACHMENT (excluding references)

- Make sure the proposal is **specific**, concentrating on one or a maximum of two projects.
- Address all the points covered in the instructions: purpose (i.e., **the “why”**), objectives, research activities, methodology.
- Link your research activities with your training plans described in section 11.
- Try to address **ALL FOUR** of the ERA’s evaluation criteria, not only “Quality of Research.”

Proposed Research: General Outline

Introduction/Rationale

- Introduce the problem and the purpose of your research (the “**why**”).
- If applicable, provide statistics showing the potential benefits for Ontario: **“Strategic Value to Ontario” criterion**.
- Outline research objectives within the context of the current state of knowledge in the field and highlight your past research successes on this topic: **“Excellence of the Researcher”** and **“Quality of Research” criteria**.

Proposed Research: General Outline

Proposed Research

- Describe your proposed research activities, outlining your methodology.
- Highlight **“Quality of Research” criterion** (e.g., excellence and originality).
- Highlight **“Development of Research Talent” criterion** (e.g., how the HQP will be involved in this research). Link to Section 11.

Conclusion and Impact

- Discuss the anticipated results and significance.
- Highlight **“Strategic Value to Ontario” criterion**.

Key Elements of a Competitive ERA Application

- Demonstrates independent research and funding record (avoid submitting too early)
- Research plan is clear, original, project-focused, and lays out significance
- Training plan is well-aligned with research and will give HQP experience/skills not available elsewhere
- Value to Ontario/knowledge transfer is clearly demonstrated
- Enthusiastic reference letters from international leaders
- Written for a multidisciplinary audience
- Follows all instructions, including formatting guidelines

Common Application Weaknesses

- Research project is too broad in scope and lacks specific objectives.
- Research plan is not clear and/or needs more methodological details, including plans for analysis of results.
- Plan to supervise trainees is not clear and/or does not address opportunities for career development.
- Proposal does not make the case that the research will create significant benefits for Ontario.
- Statement of strategic value is realistic but more detail was needed.

Common Application Weaknesses

- Candidate was just appointed and this application is premature.
 - Candidate has had limited experience training/supervising HQP.
 - Candidate has modest record of competitive grant funding.
 - Candidate's publication record is modest (not independent, low-impact journals).
- Attachments do not follow formatting guidelines.

Revising Your Proposal

- Space is tight: revise for **coherence, clarity, and concision**.
- Use the **program guidelines as a checklist**.
- Have peers (especially previously successful applicants) review the proposal for academic content. Ask peers outside your discipline to read it for clarity and persuasiveness to a multidisciplinary audience.
- **Triple check:** Have you followed all the ERA instructions, including those for attachments? Correct formatting is **essential**.

Editorial Review (optional)

- Submit a full draft by **June 25, 9:00 am** (send PDF application form, along with research proposal and CV as Word documents). Send drafts to can.lam@utoronto.ca.
- The draft should be a complete, near-final version of your application.
- Editorial review process:
 - To ensure draft application is complete and addresses program criteria
 - To ensure proposal is persuasive and logically organized
 - To copy edit for clarity and correctness
 - To check formatting

Reference Letters

Extremely important to demonstrate your standing in the field

Contact your referees as early as possible (i.e., NOW!)

Who are my referees?

- One referee: former supervisor/mentor/collaborator/corporate sponsor
- Two referees: arm's-length sources (5+ years "distance"; should be researchers of **international stature**)

What should I tell my referees to address in their letters?

- The four evaluation criteria

Be sure to provide your referees with your research plan, full CV, and background material on the ERA program.

Reference Letters

Can I fax my reference letters?

- No. Your referees must email or mail their letters directly to Research Services (can.lam@utoronto.ca). MRIS no longer requires signed, sealed original letters.

What if my reference letters don't arrive in time?

- We recommend requesting an additional two reference letters to account for this situation. If your application to MRIS does not include the three reference letters by the deadline, your application will be deemed incomplete.

Deadlines and Dates

Editorial Review (optional):

Monday, June 25, 9:00 am – Send PDF application form along with research proposal and CV as Word documents

Reference Letters:

Monday, July 16 – Letters must be received by RSO by this date.

Internal Deadline:

Monday, July 23 – Submit a complete application package to RSO **and** submit a complete application through MRA (My Research Application). Please provide enough time for your Chair and Vice-Dean Research to review your application.

ERA applications must be submitted through the Research Services Office via MRA

Application Package for RSO

Order of Documents

- Matching letters from institution and/or private sector partner
- Completed application form (pdf form)
- Appendix A (Budget Table within application form)
- Appendix B (Proposed Research, attach to form)
- Appendix C (Research Productivity and Recognition – Researcher’s full CV, attach to form)

Paper Copy

- 1 original + 1 copy of the complete ERA application
- 3 original signed letters of reference, via email or mail (send directly to RSO from referee; due by July 16)

Electronic Copy (CD or Memory Stick)

- 1 copy of the ERA application form only in PDF format
- 1 copy of the complete application, including all appendices in a converted PDF document

Contact Information

Funding Opportunity Website:

- PowerPoint slides, deadline dates, tips sheet, forms, guidelines, useful links, etc.

<http://www.research.utoronto.ca/research-funding-opportunities/early-researcher-award-era-14/>

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Guest Speaker

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Questions

